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The Shape of Things

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PERHAPS THE HIGH LIGHT OF THE WEEK'S campaign news was Governor Landon's announcement that, if elected, he would not make Mr. Hamilton, Republican National Chairman, Postmaster General. . . . Al Smith's walk around Carnegie Hall in New York City will, according to Republican estimates, cost the President 3,000,000 votes. Since the latest poll of the Institute of Public Opinion gives Mr. Landon only 225 electoral votes, including the doubtful states of New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Massachusetts, he will need Al's 3,000,000. . . . Former President Hoover, when asked how the Republican campaign looked to him, declared that it was "making progress." He had probably just read Governor Landon's farm plan, which proposes to pay farmers the equivalent of the tariff rates for agricultural commodities consumed in the United States, to the extent of two billion dollars. . . . President Roosevelt at Pittsburgh showed himself the most skilful campaigner of the century by talking about the budget so entertainingly that almost every sentence was interrupted by applause. Shortly after the speech he got a medal from the United Mine Workers of America. Also, what may prove more useful, the promise of 40,000 votes from the same source. . . . Following in the footsteps of the bankers who refused the other day to be unkind to the New Deal, the United States Chamber of Commerce has just reported that (1) unemployment figures are greatly exaggerated, (2) our monetary future is bright as a result of French devaluation, and (3) the prospects are good for a balanced budget in 1937-38. Translated, this probably means, why swap horses? . . .Senator Borah not only refuses to back Landon but declares that if he is urged too far he will "tell all," not only about the Cleveland convention but about who really wrote the telegram read to the convention over Governor Landon's name. We hope he is urged too far.

*

ITALY'S ACTION IN DEVALUATING THE LIRA by 41 per cent as against an approximately 30 per cent reduction in the value of the French and Swiss francs suggests that the danger of a world currency war is not yet averted. While it is generally conceded that the lira was overvalued in terms of other Continental currencies, Mussolini's action is bound to arouse suspicion and animosity and, if successful, may result in devaluation becoming an accepted weapon in economic warfare. Germany's next step will particularly bear watching, since it

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is probable that Hitler will tear a leaf from Il Duce's notebook and also try to undercut the franc. The most hopeful aspect of Italian and French devaluation is that both countries have seen the wisdom of cutting tariffs simultaneously with the depreciation of their currencies. This prevents the prices of imported articles from skyrocketing to the full extent of the change in currency, and reduces the danger of retaliation by other trading nations. It implies a recognition of economic realities which was wholly absent when the United States abandoned the gold standard. Unfortunately, the action cannot be construed as a reversal of the trend toward economic nationalism. The additional barrier to imports imposed by devaluation—varying from 43 per cent for France to 69 per cent for Italy—far more than offsets the mild 10 or 15 per cent reduction in tariffs, and will probably render the abolition of quotas meaningless. With all the world currencies, except that of Germany, nearly in equilibrium in terms of purchasing power, the time is ripe for an international stabilization agreement. Unless this can be made, and made reasonably quickly, the present recovery movement may be cut short by a fresh outbreak of economic war.

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THE REBEL THREAT TO MADRID HAS BEEN AT least temporarily lessened by the recapture of Maqueda and a general strengthening of the government's lines of defense. Since the capture of Toledo more than a week ago, the rebels have apparently made no progress in this sector. The vital railways to Andalusia and to Valencia and Alicante appear to be functioning regularly. Life in the capital is reported as normal except for minor shortages of meat and dairy products. Meanwhile, the morale of the government forces has been improved by the report of important victories in the Huesca sector and near Bilbao. After the reorganization of the Catalan government to include representatives of the important proletarian groups, the Barcelona militia attacked and captured Mount Aragon and Quinto Pass to press closely upon Huesca. At Bilbao the government forces have started a vigorous counter-offensive which has carried them halfway to San Sebastian. The victory at Bilbao, which was accomplished with the aid of government warships from Malaga, has been partially offset, however, by the rebels' success in reopening the sea route to Africa, which has enabled them to bring across several thousand additional Moorish troops. Even more disquieting is the fact that there has apparently been no cessation in the flow of war materials from Germany and Italy. The Spanish people cannot be expected to hold out indefinitely in a single-handed fight against world fascism.

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THE FULL EXTENT OF GERMAN AND ITALIAN aid to the Spanish rebels has been revealed for the first time during the past week in Alvarez del Vayo's statements at Geneva and William E. Dodd's testimony at hearings conducted by the British Labor Party. Mr. del Vayo pointed out that the rebels possessed a considerable number of tri-motored Junker planes although there were no German planes in the Spanish air force prior to the July outbreak. He cited a dispatch to the London *Times* to the effect that twenty-one Junkers had been received at Burgos on August 25 and a dispatch of Gerhardt Fieseler to the London *News-Chronicle* telling of the arrival of twelve German pursuit planes at Seville on September 4. The evidence of Italian aid is even more voluminous. An Italian Fiat plane commanded by Captain Monico, an Italian officer, was brought down on August 30 at Talavera. Del Vayo's report of the arrival of twenty-four Italian planes at Vigo was confirmed by Mr. Dodd, who quoted the British pro-consul at that port as having witnessed the arrival of a large shipment of Italian planes on August 23 and of another shipment on September 20. Mr. Dodd also confirmed the report that Vickers and various German firms were engaged in a flourishing trade in arms at Lisbon. From a number of sources it has been reported that Italian war planes were instrumental in defeating the government's attack on Mallorca and that they participated recently in the rebels' successful attack on the smaller Balearic island of Iviza. In the face of clear-cut evidence that fascist aid to the rebels has been unaffected by the non-intervention pact, it seems incredible that M. Blum should continue to maintain his unneutral embargo on war shipments to the legitimate Spanish government.

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THE FASCIST FORAYS IN LONDON AND PARIS early this week demonstrate first that popular feeling against the La Rocques and the Mosleys is deep and wide, and second that the fascist bands are bold, well-organized, and undeterred by law or principle. With deliberate insolence the British blackshirts attempted to parade through the Jewish sections of London, where they have lately concentrated their efforts under the protection of the very guaranties which safeguard freedom of speech and religion. The incident outlines sharply the problem confronting democratic governments. The British Home Office met the situation in what seems to be the only forceful way compatible with democratic methods. The permit for the parade was granted; when violence broke out even before the fascists had formed their ranks, the police prevented the march and gave the fascists protection from thousands of anti-fascist onlookers. In France 20,000 police met a similar situation by giving armed protection to a meeting of 100,000 Communists and Popular Front sympathizers which La Rocque's French Social Party had threatened to break up. The meeting was held peacefully though there were numerous minor street battles on the outskirts and 1,500 arrests. Immediately afterward came reports from "reliable quarters" in France that the fascists are engaged in a systematic campaign to undermine the loyalty of the national police forces, that they are smuggling arms from Switzerland, and in general proving that the disbanding of the Croix de Feu is a myth. In numbers the Popular Front is obviously far superior to the fascists. But while the fascists are secretly or openly armed—not only with guns but with the money of the big industrialists—the people must depend upon the loyalty of the police and the army.

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REPORTS OF THE THREATENED DEFEAT OF this or that member of the progressive bloc in Congress are probably too pessimistic. Political experience seems to prove that when a really outstanding member of Congress seeks reelection, the opposition party generally either concedes defeat and runs a nincompoop against him or, refusing to surrender, puts forward the best it can offer in the shape of a candidate. But even that realization will not quell the alarm one feels at hearing that such men as Sisson, Kopplemann, and Marcantonio are involved in hard fights for reelection and will need every bit of support they can get to defeat their rivals. Marcantonio is the most fearless crusader in the House and one of the few Congressmen who can be counted on to form the nucleus of an effective progressive wing. There are not more than a dozen such men in the House, unless one admits to the bloc all the money nuts and crackpots whose sole claim to inclusion is their ability to shout louder than their confreres about "Wall Street"; they vote "Main Street," which is only Wall Street on small time. Sisson's defeat would be a blow to all foes of teachers' oaths and similar Hearstian obscenities and would be hailed as such. His record in the House is less brilliant than Marcantonio's but one that leaves him no less deserving of liberal support. As for Kopplemann—it is hard to believe that the working men and women in Hartford will let him down. He has never let them down. Of course, he has betrayed the arms and munitions manufacturers by voting "right" on every peace issue that has come before Congress since he entered its halls, but that should not be held against him by the great majority of voters.

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THE REPORT OF THE FEDERAL TRADE COMmission on conditions in the New York milk shed was released at too opportune a moment. With the producers in a militant mood and consumers talking of boycotts, the commission apparently tried to play safe by saying as little as it could about the disparity between producers' prices and consumers' costs. Yet one incident that found its way into the report indicates why New York farmers are at the point of rebellion. To avoid paying the price for fluid milk established by the state control board, Muller Dairies, a subsidiary of National Dairy Products Corporation, leased three of its plants to an affiliated company engaged in the processing of milk for non-fluid purposes—for which the producer receives a lower price. Its supply of fluid milk for delivery in the metropolitan area it obtained from Pennsylvania. "The manipulation of sources of supply by shifting plants from one subsidiary to another," says the report, "caused the farmers delivering milk to the three Muller Dairies plants in New York State to receive surplus instead of fluid-milk prices, as a result of which producers lost over $17,600 during April, 1935, or at the rate of over $200,000 a year." Of the two major producers' cooperatives operating in the state, one was definitely shown to be controlled by Sheffield Farms Company, another subsidiary of National Dairy Products. Thus the producer in selling to the distributor finds himself represented by his customer. Here we have all the major faults of our system of distribution —starved producers, bilked consumers, faked competition, dominant monopolies. If the FTC pulls its punches now, it will miss the opportunity to do one of the most important jobs in its history.

*

THE ARREST OF MR. BROWDER, CANDIDATE OF the Communist Party for President, because he proposed to make a political campaign speech, is as clear a violation of the Bill of Rights as we have had for a long time. Since the Mayor of Terre Haute invoked both Mr. Roosevelt and Governor Landon in his announcement that he would protect his city from Communist agitators—"Both of the major-party Presidential candidates . . . recognize communism as a menace to the nation," he said—it would have been fitting if the President and Mr. Landon had issued a joint statement declaring Mayor Beecher's action illegal and unconstitutional. Neither of them saw fit to do so, although Mr. Browder's more immediate rival, Norman Thomas, sent a number of protesting telegrams. The New York press, with the exception of that great champion of Americanism, Mr. Hearst, was quick to declare that the right of free speech had been violated. The *Times* led the way in a firm and forthright denunciation of Terre Haute's officials and a clear statement of the constitutional infringement. Even the new commander of the American Legion, Harry W. Colmery, said that "if the sole purpose of his [Browder's] arrest was to prevent him from speaking, it is contrary both to American principles and to the principles on which the Legion stands." When a Legion commander defends a Communist's right of free speech, not only is it news but it ought to awaken an echo even in the mind of the Mayor of Terre Haute.

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GERMANY'S MINISTER OF EDUCATION, DR. Rust, has just issued one of the most disheartening decrees that have come out of the Third Reich. The period of elementary and high-school education is to be reduced by the equivalent of three years; one year is lopped off *in toto* and two by cutting out one day or more a week over a period of twelve years. The time saved will be devoted to goose-stepping and learning to swallow the principles of "Heil" ideology. Once Germany had a right to be proud of one of the most thorough educational systems in the world. No better comment on its present degeneration could be found than the figures showing that the number of university students is now half what it was before the advent of National Socialism. From the journal *Swiat* of Warsaw comes a report of the type of arithmetic problems now given in German schools: "(1) Bombing planes have a speed of 280 kilometers per hour. Calculate how long it would take to cover the distance from Wroclaw to Prague, Munich to Strassburg, Cologne to Metz. (2) The World War, in which Germany mobilized 13,250,000 soldiers, lasted 1,563 days. How many German soldiers sacrificed their lives per day? per hour? How many died each minute? (3) Up to March 15, 1935, Germany had a frontier of 6,000 kilometers guarded by 100,000

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soldiers, while France had a frontier of 2,700 kilometers guarded by 600,000 soldiers. How many soldiers per kilometer guarded the frontier of Germany? of France? How many soldiers ought Germany to have?" If this is typical of the education young Germans receive today, Dr. Rust's decree will not result in much loss to them after all.

Mr. Landon's Ethics and Social Security

GOVERNOR LANDON has made one of his costliest blunders on the issue of social security—an issue out of which he had every opportunity to make political capital. No law passed by the Administration falls as far short of the President's glittering promises as the federal Social Security Act. The Administration had no excuse for failure. Committees of experts had been working on the general problem for nearly eighteen months before the law was finally passed. Yet when it came to a showdown the Administration deliberately rejected the advice of practically all the experts it had assembled. Responsibility for a bad law must fall directly on the President and his Cabinet.

Thus the stage was set for a masterly political stroke on the part of Mr. Landon. He had the reactionary forces of the country solidly behind him. Why not make a bid for support of the masses by revealing the weakness of the Administration's measure and advocating a more rational and far-reaching social security? He had the ammunition in hand in the form of an excellent report on the Security Act which had been prepared for the Twentieth Century Fund. As we pointed out last week, Mr. Landon did an expert job in that part of his Milwaukee speech which was devoted to criticism of the existing law. That speech was in strong contrast with the general run of his campaign utterances; it was obvious that the Governor had definite factual data on which to base his attack. But unfortunately there was a marked hiatus between his criticism of the existing law and his constructive proposals. After a withering attack on the old-age-insurance provisions of the act, Mr. Landon could only propose that the whole plan be scrapped and that the aged be forced to depend on state pensions which would be available only to those who had definitely established their need.

Politically, the whole thing might have been passed over as simply another inept Landon speech if John G. Winant, former Republican Governor of New Hampshire, had not resigned as chairman of the Social Security Board in order that he might be free to reply to Governor Landon. In his letter of resignation Mr. Winant took pains to point out that the Social Security Act was a bipartisan measure, that three times as many Republicans had voted for the act as against it, and that what Mr. Landon was proposing was nothing else than "a dole with a means test," which in New Hampshire includes "the pauper's oath and disfranchisement." Thus forced into a corner, Governor Landon made a second blunder even more stupid than the first. In an attempt to defend his position he issued a statement declaring that he had based his Milwaukee speech on an unpublished report of the Twentieth Century Fund, prepared by "some of the most competent men in the country in this field." The Twentieth Century Fund, he added, was supported by the "Filene Foundation" and had withheld publication of the report for the sake of Mr. Roosevelt's campaign. Unfortunately for Mr. Landon, it soon developed that (1) there is no "Filene Foundation"; (2) the document which the Governor released was not a report of the Committee on Old Age Security appointed by the Twentieth Century Fund, but a preliminary report prepared by a member of the research staff which, among other reports, is yet to be considered by the committee; (3) a draft of the report had been given Landon with instructions that it was to be considered confidential until after the committee had acted upon it; and (4) Governor Landon's conclusions are diametrically opposed to those contained in the document which he released to the press.

The criticisms of the Social Security Act contained in the research report prepared for the Twentieth Century Fund follow closely those which have frequently been made in *The Nation* and which are ably argued in an article in this issue by Abraham Epstein, executive secretary of the American Association for Old Age Security. Since the research report is limited to the problem of old-age security, it naturally does not touch on the Administration's failure to provide protection for the millions who are now unemployed. It does, however, make a frontal attack on the inadequacies of the old-age sections of the act. It points out that about two-thirds of the adult population of the United States is permanently outside the contributory system of old-age insurance, and that the size of benefits derived from this source during the next fifteen or twenty years is pitifully small. A very vigorous and effective attack is directed against the pay-roll taxes as well as the absurdity of the $50,000,000,000 reserve fund, which Landon very properly denounced. But instead of describing the plan as "a cruel hoax" on the workers, the report calls the old-age provisions of the act "a significant beginning in the direction of providing really adequate care for the aged." Instead of advocating that the compulsory insurance plan be repealed, as Mr. Landon does, the report recommends not only that it be maintained but that it be broadened in scope to include as large a proportion of the population as possible. The Governor and the report have opposing views, also, on the question of financing social security. Mr. Landon advocates a special tax, earmarked for the purpose, which "should be widely distributed," presumably a sales tax. The report declares that as much revenue as possible should be obtained from progressive income taxes and the remainder from contributions by the insured. It states that such a scheme "cannot adhere to actuarial principles," but should receive at least partial support "from the general revenues of the government."

On the ethics of giving out a confidential report little need be said. It appears obvious that a man who would violate a confidence merely because it seemed to further

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his political ambitions is unworthy of the office to which Mr. Landon aspires. What is much more important, no man with Mr. Landon's views on social security should be permitted to set foot in the White House.

The Moscow Trials

THE People's Commissariat of Justice of the U. S. S. R. has issued in English an official "record of court proceedings" in "The Case of the Trotsky-ite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center." The Soviet government is correct in assuming that the English-speaking world is still interested in the strange trials in which sixteen men, among them several old Bolsheviks, repeated, confirmed, and seemed to revel in confessions of guilt. In these confessions the "employees," as they are designated in the indictment, involved themselves and one another in a widespread plot to assassinate the principal Soviet leaders and seize power. Most of all, however, they incriminated Leon Trotsky as the spiritual leader and actual director of their activities; and one of their number, Valentine Olberg, testified that Trotsky had conspired with the German Gestapo to bring about the assassination of Stalin and the overthrow of his regime. It was this last charge that fell like a thunderbolt not only among the proletarian organizations of the world but also in the ranks of those liberals and democrats who have defended the Soviet Union since its desperate beginnings.

The official record of the court proceedings, unfortunately, does not decide the issue. The reader is not helped by the fact that it is not a transcript—instead, large sections of important testimony are merely summarized in terms not usually to be met with in the records of a court of law. What is more disturbing, there is no indication, with one minor exception, of the presence in court of any documentary evidence beyond the confessions which had already been made in private examinations and set down in the government records. Most of the defendants, as the newspaper accounts indicated at the time, were voluble and often melodramatic in confirming the charges against them. But one of the witnesses was recalcitrant throughout. This was Smirnov, described as "the closest friend of Trotsky and the actual organizer and leader" inside Russia. Smirnov "denies his own direct part in the terroristic activities and only partly admits his crimes," reads the official report. At such times as he denies charges he is confronted with his own confession made privately beforehand or with the testimony of his codefendants, whose confessions are also already on record. "Under the weight of all these *irrefutable facts,*" says the report, "Smirnov at last admits" his guilt. At one point he is "completely exposed" by an outside witness who is not a codefendant but due to be tried on other charges. This witness is his wife, Safonova.

Like all the important political trials that preceded it, this one was conducted in a manner foreign to democratic ideals of justice. The pre-trial conduct of the government-controlled press was particularly shocking. On August 16, three days before the trial began, the Soviet papers, according to the *Daily Worker,* recorded that the Russian masses were demanding that the defendants be shown no mercy. On the same day a dispatch quoted *Pravda* as follows: "Investigations disclose a monstrous plot. . . . In an open court, before the whole world, these criminals will answer for their abominable work, and receive the punishment they deserve." Given this overwhelming presumption of guilt, it is at least a question whether the proceedings could be in any true sense a trial.

An underground opposition undoubtedly exists in the Soviet Union, if only because public opposition is impossible. It seems probable that Trotsky's open and persistent criticism of Stalin's regime provided the ideological basis of this opposition. It is inevitable that the Soviet government should try to stamp it out; and if Trotsky was actually directing it, he was liable to the penalties an established government exacts in such cases. But the Soviet government, by conducting an open trial, was under every obligation to conduct that trial according to the ordinary rules of evidence and the ordinary personal safeguards. Genuine evidence of guilt, if any existed, would only strengthen the government's case.

To the outside world the charge that Trotsky conspired with the Gestapo is on its face the most serious and least credible. Yet it is precisely on this point that the fabric of proof, as it is spread out in the official record, becomes most thin. Trotsky is actually linked with the Gestapo only by the testimony of Valentine Olberg, who made his first and last world appearance in the Moscow trial. Before his forcible internment in Norway Trotsky, whose position in world affairs is of somewhat longer standing, stated that he had documents to show that Olberg attempted to become his secretary and was rejected as being a possible spy in the beginning of 1930. It is Olberg's word against Trotsky's.

Olberg at least has had his day in court. Trotsky is entitled to no less, and he has asked that his case be submitted to an international proletarian commission. Yet it was at least partly as a result of the Soviet demand for his deportation that the Norwegian government chose to interpret political asylum as imprisonment incomunicado and confined Trotsky without notice to a remote villa shortly after the close of the Moscow trials. On another page appears the letter which Trotsky wrote to the Minister of Justice, Trygve Lie, telling him why he could not accept the more stringent conditions then laid down for his continued stay in Norway. This letter, except for a copy smuggled abroad, was interned with Trotsky along with other material presumably relating to his defense against the Moscow charges. Trotsky's partisans are now attempting to bring his defense before the public through a court action in Norway.

The mystery that veils the motives and conduct of the Moscow trials cannot conceal their essential implications. Despite the safeguards promised by the new constitution, political considerations still dominate the administration of justice in the Soviet Union. And political considerations dominate the interpretation of political asylum even in a democratic country.

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Mutiny and the Bounty

A RUMOR is going the rounds that the employers of San Francisco, good Republicans all, have been waiting for an opportunity to close their establishments up and down Market Street as well as on the docks, put the blame on labor, raise a rip-roaring red scare, and swing California to Landon. Rumors, like other tall tales, often contain a basic element of truth. In this case it was clear that President Roosevelt did not want a major test of strength just now between the shippers and the 37,000 members of the Pacific Maritime Federation. He hastily made three temporary appointments to the Maritime Commission authorized by the ship-subsidy act which he signed late in June. Although they have no actual jurisdiction as yet, they persuaded the employers to back down a bit from demands which could only have resulted in a strike and lockout. A fifteen-day truce is now on.

The Maritime Commission, though temporary and as yet incomplete, was in a position to talk turkey to the men who go down to the sea in ship subsidies. This commission will have powers over shipping comparable to those of the Interstate Commerce Commission over land transportation, with the added power to grant direct subsidies for the construction and operation of new ships.

Will the history of such subsidies turn out to be any less infamous than that of mail subsidies? Much depends, of course, on the personnel of the permanent Maritime Commission. But even if the Maritime Commission is manned entirely by persons of the caliber of Joseph Eastman, and even if the shippers and their lobby suddenly become as pure as the driven snow, the ship-subsidy act gives scope for one of the most expensive marine sprees in history. The commission is charged with building up an "adequate and well-balanced" merchant fleet. In addition to the wide powers implied in this phrase, the commission will have authority to establish regulations for wages and working conditions. Shipping men, it is reported, think this plan will eliminate seamen's strikes for higher wages, since the government will make up the difference between the American scale and that paid on foreign ships.

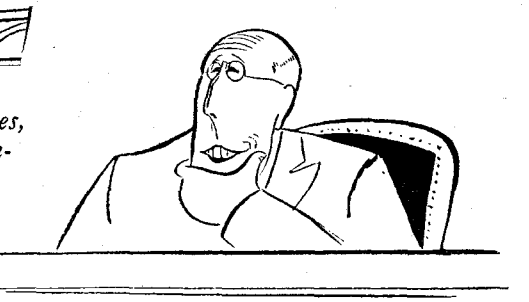
It is no accident, of course, that two of the temporary appointees are navy men, one of them being Rear Admiral Wiley, past commander of the fleet. The next war will undoubtedly play an important part in determining what constitutes an "adequate" merchant marine.

In a later issue *The Nation* will publish an analysis of the ship-subsidy act and its implications for labor and the public. It will keep track of the Maritime Commission in its administration of vast powers and large funds. Meanwhile it is just as well that the Pacific Maritime Federation is already strong enough to bring effective pressure not only on the employers in San Francisco but on the President in the White House. Particularly in view of the possible uses to which the powers of the Maritime Commission may be put in time of war, every ounce of labor's pressure must now be directed toward having a genuine friend appointed to the permanent commission.

At the La Follette Labor-Spy Hearings

A. S. Ailes, who sells gas to break strikes: "I'm not only improving industry, but I'm improving society."

Senator La Follette to A. S. Ailes, vice-president, Lake Erie Chemical Company: "What do you mean by 'toxic gas'?"



Senator Thomas to Mr. Ailes: "You can't use gas promiscuously, can you?

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WASHINGTON WEEKLY

BY PAUL W. WARD

Roosevelt Stands Firm on Power

Washington, October 5

ROOSEVELT still holds the fort. In the series of conferences held here in the last few days on the fate of the TVA, he has not yielded an inch to the power boys, and in consequence the power issue continues to be the one major issue on which Roosevelt has not trimmed. It is true, of course, that ample time for trimming still remains and that no one can yet be certain that the TVA will not at some future date be sold down the river, but the course of the power parleys here this past week offers little ground for such fears.

You may not have gathered this from the daily press. In fact, if you read the financial journals, you probably have just the opposite impression as to the outcome of the meetings. It is one of the amusing factors in the situation that a large section of the daily press and all the financial journals that I have seen, in attempting to play the game of the power boys, unwittingly have played the Administration's game instead. They have broadcast accounts which pictured the power parleys as a peace conference and pictured the Administration as on the verge of a truce with the power trust. In so doing they have pushed utility stocks upward and allayed the fears of thousands of investors whom the power trust has been laboring to keep in a state of anti-Roosevelt panic.

Spiking the political guns of the power gang is precisely the effect Roosevelt hoped to achieve when he announced the conferences in a statement that spoke fulsomely of cooperation between the TVA and the private power companies. When he got them in his office he said he wanted to hear nothing except discussion of "pooling transmission lines." Thomas W. Lamont could achieve nothing better than the sort of speech usually given at cornerstone-layings. Owen D. Young, addressing himself as usual to the hemispheres, discoursed at Roosevelt's bidding on the prospect that a few centuries hence there will be no transmission lines to pool, power being distributed by radio. None of the power boys were allowed to get a word in edgewise about the pressing problem of competition between the TVA and the private power companies.

Even in the conferences with TVA officials and other federal power experts that followed their meeting with the President, the power boys were not permitted to gain the foothold for which they had hoped. The Administration planned to make them sweat, and it succeeded. It is proceeding on the theory that when they have sweated a little longer—and Election Day has passed, destroying their hope of substituting Landon for Roosevelt—the power boys will be ready to talk business. They are nearly ready now, in the opinion of Roosevelt and his TVA aides, but not quite. They have yet to test their political strength in the election, and their only other weapon, the courts, has not as yet been fully tried. That is why the conferences were not permitted to get anywhere, although the power boys avowedly wanted to come to terms. They were ready with three proposals and, in fact, had reduced them to writing, but they never got a chance to lay them on the table. They were ready to propose, first, that the TVA either confine itself to producing power and sell only to private power companies or buy out all the companies in its area lock, stock, and barrel, through negotiation or, if that failed, by resort to condemnation. They were ready to propose as an alternative that the TVA bind itself to stay within its present bounds, selling power only to private companies and to those few little municipal systems already established in its territory. The third alternative they were prepared to urge was that the TVA buy out the private company serving some one metropolitan area in the Tennessee Valley and bind itself not to attempt to extend its domain any farther into the territories which the private utilities serve.

The Administration is unwilling to accept any of these proposals. To accept either of the first two would be plainly to contravene the act setting up the TVA and to abandon the purposes for which the TVA was created, if one may count out the proposal that the TVA buy out all the private companies in the valley. The government is not prepared at this time to commit itself to any such program involving the outlay of hundreds of millions. As for the third proposal, the TVA takes the position that it cannot legally bind itself to agree to sell power to one municipality and refuse to sell to others. It does not quarrel with the power boys in their contention that once the TVA gets into a metropolitan market, it will be forced into all the other metropolitan markets in the valley and will squeeze the private companies out of the field one after the other in rapid succession unless its spread is put under contractual restraints. Instead, with Roosevelt's apparently firm backing, it is waiting for the power trust to surrender to the inevitable and come to terms.

Federal officials believe the power boys already have begun to change their tempers. Out in Seattle they have at last given up their thirty-year battle against public ownership and sold out to the municipal system. A similar sale is in process of negotiation at Los Angeles; and at Springfield, Illinois, the Commonwealth and Southern Corporation—which controls the Tennessee Valley power companies most immediately threatened with direct TVA competition—has just sold out to the municipal system. In all three cases public and private systems have been in competition for from twenty to thirty years. Federal officials hope that Commonwealth and Southern will shortly

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be ready to sell its Chattanooga property without demanding assurances that the TVA will not later take over Memphis, Knoxville, and Nashville, where the citizenry also have voted overwhelmingly to set up municipal distribution systems and buy TVA power.

Commonwealth and Southern is only one of the holding companies involved; it controls the Chattanooga and Nashville properties. And it is anxious to come to terms with the TVA because its subsidiaries in the valley have $600,000,000 in bonds and preferred stocks outstanding at interest rates nearly double those of the present money market. Uncertainties arising from the TVA situation have made it impossible for the company to refinance those obligations and get fresh capital for badly needed plant expansions. Present interest rates take more than thirty-eight cents out of every income dollar, and this sum could be cut in half by refinancing, with an attendant freeing of funds for dividends on the operating companies' common stocks, which are held by the holding company. Another evidence of the pressure under which Commonwealth and Southern is operating is the fact that, with refinancing closed to its operating subsidiaries in the TVA area, it has had to dip into its own coffers and lend them $20,000,000 to meet maturities.

Roosevelt's handling of the power conference was only a little slicker than his handling of the tripartite agreement for international currency stabilization, and this last was, if anything, too slick. He slipped when he let Secretary Morgenthau raise his fantastic howl about Russian meddling with the pound. His eagerness to seize upon any club at hand with which to beat down the Hearstlings who cry out that he is in cahoots with Moscow is understandable, but in this case it betrayed him. You may be sure that Morgenthau raised his howl under orders from Roosevelt, for Morgenthau never says anything of more than accidental importance without permission in advance. Morgenthau admittedly had talked with Roosevelt a number of times that morning before he called in the press to hear his incredible announcement that Moscow had tried to bust Mr. Roosevelt's stabilization agreement through a raid upon the pound. He adjured the reporters to stop questioning him and to put the news on the wires.

Accentuating this political shenanigan is a nasty story that is making the Washington rounds. It seems that the stabilization-agreement ballyhoo was contrived merely to help the Blum government through its painful task of devaluation and that the United States, England, and France are actually little nearer a real agreement than they were a year ago. According to this tale, which emanates from an almost too authoritative source, the British are insistent on stabilization of the pound at $4.50, and the United States Treasury is willing to go no lower than the pre-war parity of $4.86. Morgenthau screamed bloody murder across the front pages of the nation because a routine exchange transaction by the U. S. S. R. drove the pound down to $4.91—five points *above* the level to which this government is willing to see it drop.

U. S. S. R. in 1936

BY LOUIS FISCHER

Kiev, early September, 1936

THE Soviet Union is becoming less like its past and more and more like its future. The numerous ugly vestiges of Czarism and the wounds of a costly revolution are disappearing before the emerging contours of another era. The U. S. S. R.'s present is beginning to be a blueprint of its future.

Tiflis has a new and broad Riverside Drive, straight new streets hewn out of the hills in the town, blocks of new students' dormitories, and rows of new workers' homes. Hundreds of fine, big school buildings, started several months ago, are nearing completion in all Soviet cities—in Leningrad alone 116 were erected this summer. Kiev in the last year put up numerous excellent apartment houses—not so coldly cubistic as the inconvenient architectural abominations of an earlier formalistic period. The eye of every Soviet traveler feasts on thousands of recently laid-out parks, some large for culture and rest as in Baku, some consisting only of a few flower beds and benches—a vacant lot converted into a haven. Millions of trees have been planted in double or quadruple lines along streets and roads to banish the shadeless thoroughfares of Czarist times. Benches with wooden umbrellas over them for the hiker have been placed on hot country highways. There are children's day nurseries on crowded Black Sea steamers. Most cities now have richly equipped playhouses for boy and girl pioneers, and Kharkov has devoted one of its finest palaces, formerly the headquarters of the Ukrainian government, to this purpose. Rostov has just completed the grandest theater erected under the Soviet regime. It also boasts a new trolley-bus line through a new central avenue. Novorossisk is building more factories and more homes, and is absorbing a neighboring village. Nalchik, a gem in the North Caucasian republic of the Kabardinians, is expanding ambitiously. Since my last Soviet journey a year ago this one-story town of 40,000 people has finished about twenty structures of two and three stories. Moscow's growth astounds even the permanent resident when he goes on a housing hunt. Leningrad, the laggard, is also slowly trying to accommodate its increasing population.

Every collective farm I visited has a "hut laboratory"—a small building supplied with charts, pictures, models of agricultural equipment, a microscope, and so on. Here the

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peasants take courses in the proper preparation of seed, the proper use of machinery, plant and animal diseases, fertilizer, crop rotation. Thus is science being brought down to the lowest producing unit, the mujik, who now resents that name, once synonymous with serfdom and backwardness. Today he is a *kolhoz-nik*. A considerable number of *kolhozi* have acquired one-and-one-half-ton motor trucks during the last year. Consequently crops are moved more quickly with less loss, human backs and animals are spared, the chauffeur joins the tractor driver in forming a bridge between farm and city, and the peasant discovers a hitherto unknown interest in good roads. He begins to lay them. The bicycle too has come to the village, and tractors and combines are ubiquitous. Electric threshers are being manufactured. At the giant Zernograd state farm near Rostov specialists have been experimenting with an electric tractor, an electric combine, and a tractor that runs on rubber balloon tires.

Mechanization and an improved agrarian technique proved their value this summer. But for them there would have been a bad crop failure. Most of the Ukraine, which grows 25 per cent of the country's grain, had only one good rain between sowing and reaping. Nevertheless, the Ukraine boasts a better yield this year than in 1935. A better yield was likewise obtained in the North Caucasus, the Soviets' second most productive granary. Everywhere in the collectives I asked for an explanation, and everywhere it was the same. Fallow is now a universal feature; it conditions the earth for richer harvests. Tractors made it possible to plow when the ground still held all its winter moisture and before a horse could have turned the heavy soil. The seed was selected, and planted much deeper than before. That was a guaranty against the effects of drought. When the mad heat wave of July-August smote the fields, burning wheat and rye, the peasants rushed out with their combines and speedily put the grain in barns. On August 15, 1935, some 57,126,000 hectares had been harvested; on the same date this year the figure was 62,318,000 hectares. Earlier in the month on August 10 the discrepancy was greater—7,801,000 hectares.

The U. S. S. R. is garnering the fruits of the expensive process of collectivization. There may yet be bad crop years, but the arbitrary dictatorship of nature is now countered by the will of collective man armed with the mechanical wonders that spring from his inventive brain. These and the soil he puts to their maximum use. As a result, living standards in the countryside are obviously rising. In a Kabardinian peasant hut I asked what articles the family had recently acquired. Among the objects were two pairs of shoes for each of the women folk—a pair for Sunday and another for week days—and a fancy umbrella. A household without a cow is now a rarity. Herds are appreciably bigger. Horned cattle in the Ukraine increased 26.7 per cent in the last year; hogs over 60 per cent; sheep 42.5 per cent. A *kolhoz* near Kharkov was proud of a stable of beautiful young horses which had never worked; animals receive the tenderest care from experts. More is expected of the peasants—I found shock brigades and "Stakhanovites" in the collectives—and more is given to them. The peasantry never ate so well as it eats now. In a tobacco-growing Crimean village a husband and wife last year earned 8,000 rubles in cash, plus fruit, nuts, vegetables, cheese, and so on. I refused to believe this statement until I saw it in black and white in the bookkeeper's ledger. That couple was not an exception. This year there are many like them in the same village. Eight thousand rubles is a year's wage of two good city workingmen. In grain regions the income is smaller but large enough to be hard to spend. There is still a shortage of consumers' goods owing to the continued over-emphasis on heavy industry and armament-making.

The peasant dislikes this, yet understands. He has learned to think collectively. The *kolhoz* destroyed the fence that separated the peasant's field from that of his neighbor. Therewith, after a time, the fence around his mind also disappeared. His small plot of ground, his rude dwelling, his family, his primitive agricultural work, the church, used to be his whole world. Today he is part of the collective; the collective's business is his business. It is a complicated business. His mind grows in following it and in listening to reports about it. The collective's life depends on industry, on the supply of machines and gasoline, on state policy. Bolshevik politics and, inevitably, international affairs become the peasant's daily concern. He wants to read a paper, listen to the radio. Talented youngsters are sent to the best city educational institutions. A new generation of able, intelligent organizers and leaders is springing up.

A young engineer showed me the Dnieper Dam. I asked him about his life. He used to tend the cows in an Azerbaijan village. The director of the Chakwah tea factory near Batum is also a former shepherd boy. I passed a new students' dormitory building in Rostov, entered, and unceremoniously knocked at one door after another. Three women were preparing for a history examination. They gave correct and clever answers to questions about the American Civil War, the French Revolution, and so on. Two had come from a village, worked as housemaids in the city, and gone to night school. Now they were village school teachers taking a six months' special course. The third woman was a Greek Armenian, aged thirty. Five years ago she was illiterate, working underground in the Donetz coal mines. She has been teaching school for a year. She asked penetrating questions about the capitalist world. Such cases are legion. These people are the new Russia. They have remarkable dignity and self-assurance. They make higher demands on life. They will take the new constitution very seriously.

Dignity is also the outstanding impression made by racial minorities. With the coming of Sovietism the suppressed ethnic units of old Russia emerged as communities with their own individuality, their own cultures, their own governments. They are endlessly grateful for their new existence. Among them the regime finds some of its staunchest supporters. The Bolsheviks leaned over backward to meet the needs of these national minorities. The result is a bulwark against nationalism. Throughout the Soviet Union the observer encounters endless pride in the latest achievements of the country. But it is not a pride in

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the achievements of "Russia," for half of the U. S. S. R. is not Russia. It is made up of scores of national minorities. Stalin the Georgian, Kaganovich the Jew, Ordjonekidze the Georgian, Mikoyan the Armenian—all of them members of the paramount Politbureau—cannot be proud of "Russia." Nor can they suppose that Georgia or Armenia is responsible for Soviet successes. All the nationalities of the country have contributed to them. The U. S. S. R. is itself a real international.

Public enthusiasm is greater and more widespread than I have ever known it during my fourteen years in the Soviet Union. The fact is as undubitable as the reason is simple. The enthusiasm is not mere sentiment which has to be fed by "stunts" as in some other countries; it is based on solid material improvement. In the last five weeks I have traveled thousands of miles through the country, visiting many villages and twelve cities. I have inspected factories, rest homes, sanatoria. I have talked to people in trains, on steamers. Of every person to whom I spoke I inquired how much he or she earned. I must have asked over a thousand people. In all instances they earned more this year than last. Usually it was considerably more. At the Kirov (formerly Putilov) plant in Leningrad the average wage of a worker was 252 rubles in 1935 and 311 rubles in the first half of 1936. The income of engineers, technicians, and the like rose from 475 to 599 rubles in the same period, and that of the factory's clerical staff from 223 to 269 rubles. I estimate that average wages have risen 20 per cent throughout the Soviet Union in the last twelve months. Simultaneously prices have fallen, but not as much as people expected and hoped. Prices are still excessive. This applies especially to bread, shoes, and many articles of clothing. The Stakhanov movement, which was launched late in August, 1935, simply means more efficient work by individuals and more rationalized operation by plants. This brings higher individual incomes, more employment, and greater economies in factories—half of the savings, according to a recent decree, must be spent on home construction. In the intervening twelve months the industrial output of the U. S. S. R. has increased 30 per cent. Consumers' goods, however, do not bulk as large in this increase as heavy mechanical equipment. Yet the availability of consumers' commodities is an important determinant of the general price scale. A price slash is promised for the end of 1936. Every price reduction implies another improvement of a living standard which has left the Czarist level far behind but which is still much too low for a socialist state.

Above all, the population needs homes. Housing has made vast progress, but is still sadly inadequate. Seven years ago the Soviets laid the foundation of a new, industrialized nation. That process yielded iron, steel, bricks, glass, for building purposes. From 1929 on these materials went into new plants and into the houses connected with them. This division of materials between industrial and private needs caused housing to lag. The same division persists today owing to the construction of factories, schools, military structures, offices, and so forth. Next year the present emphasis on schools may be shifted to hospitals. Moreover, there is always a shortage of labor. In Moscow I know of large apartment blocks which remain unfinished owing to a scarcity of workingmen. Labor efficiency in this branch is extremely low. Few processes are mechanized. Less living space was created in 1935 than in 1934, Plumbing is poor, interior finish bad, and modern conveniences like refrigeration or air conditioning are unknown. Much could be accomplished by a commissar of housing endowed with the energy, talents, and authority of a Kaganovich or Ordjonekidze. Housing must now be placed in the center of Soviet attention, for overcrowding in homes creates serious problems. And nothing so effectively blots out the fact of Czarism as a fresh row of fine houses on the spot where miserable tenements once stood. If prices go down and homes go up, the U. S. S. R. will be able to stop harking back to the pre-1914 period and start making comparisons with advanced Western nations.

Social Security Betrayed

BY ABRAHAM EPSTEIN

I

FAR from being a radical social measure, the New Deal Social Security Act is the most reactionary social-insurance plan in existence. Its major features are neither social nor conducive to security. In a world ruled by slogans it is not surprising, however, to find American liberals ensnared into unquestioning acceptance of the act. The promise of security is most alluring. The slogan of "social security" encompasses all fond hopes and pious wishes. Even enemies of social legislation insist that they favor the *idea* of social security.

The vast range and complexity of the act have served to obscure its social limitations and sinister implications. The combination of ten different insurance and relief programs, based on three different philosophies of governmental operation, has made understanding well-nigh impossible. The embodiment of good, bad, and indifferent plans in one measure has impeded critical discussion of the socially questionable features.

Sooner or later the American people are bound to realize that, despite its glittering title, the act does not solve the problems of insecurity. The law does not even attempt to meet the major ills of present-day society. The great modern hazards afflicting millions of wage and

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salaried earners are sickness and invalidity, unemployment, old-age dependency, industrial accidents, death, widowhood, and orphanage. Although illness is one of the major causes of economic insecurity, threatening workers in good times as in bad and accounting for nearly half of all dependency in normal times, the act completely ignores this problem. It does not touch upon accident compensation, which is still non-existent in two states and extremely inadequate in most others, nor does it make burial provisions. Except for the destitute blind, it fails to provide for the invalid. Its chief concern is with unemployment and old-age dependency.

The inequities of the act, however, do not lie in its omissions. Constructive provision for the two major hazards of unemployment and old-age dependency would justify the New Deal claims. The deficiencies of the act lie in its commissions, because it not only offers little security against the hazards which it covers, but may tend actually to aggravate present insecurity. The act offers little or no security to the unemployed for these reasons:

1. It ignores and evades the most immediate and pressing phase of unemployment—the huge army of unemployed. Even if all states enacted unemployment-insurance laws, those now out of work could not possibly benefit until they had been reabsorbed and then again thrown out by private industry. Under no conditions can benefits be paid until two years after a state has enacted an unemployment-insurance law. Since so far only about one-fourth of the states have enacted such laws, benefits can be paid in but few of them before 1940.

2. The act offers insignificant protection even for the future unemployed because the 3 per cent levy on pay rolls will, at best, allow only about ten weeks of benefits. Even in good times more than half of the insured workers will fall outside this short benefit period. For example, the most that will be collected under the New York unemployment-insurance law in 1938, when the full 3 per cent tax becomes effective, is approximately $90,000,000. The total collected will not equal the expenditures now made by New York City alone for its unemployed during three months. The problem of what to do for workers who have exhausted the short benefit period is completely ignored. Nor is the problem of migratory workers met.

3. National coverage in unemployment insurance is extremely uncertain under the present tax-credit device. Not only have the states been slow to enact these laws, but it is not likely that complete state coverage will be attained in the near future. Many states will encounter constitutional difficulties in levying pay-roll taxes as well as in meeting the other federal requirements. The inducement which the act gives employers to seek state action is nullified by burdening them with two duplicating tax and record systems as well as with additional taxes in some states.

4. Even if all the states enact laws, national uniformity will not be attained because the act encourages a variety of state schemes, regardless of their efficacy. The states are offered five different unemployment-compensation schemes: the single pooled fund, individual company-reserve plans, merit-rating systems, employment-guaranty plans, or any combination of these four. Each state has complete freedom to determine the rates of contributions, the amount and duration of benefits, and when these shall begin. The act specifies only when payments cannot, not when they must, begin. Each state act may or may not require contributions from employees and the state government. Benefits may be $15 a week for twenty weeks or $3 or less a week for five weeks or less. This will result in a miscellany of state plans and in endless confusion and great inequality among workers and among employers in the different states. There are already vital differences in the thirteen existing laws. Since the Social Security Board boasts of its "neutral" attitude on the basic principles of unemployment insurance, the hope of establishing a uniform and adequate system of unemployment insurance throughout the United States is frustrated.

5. Most crucial is the fact that the tax-credit device employed by the act makes future improvements almost impossible. The equalized federal tax, levying the same tax on employers in all states, will deter states from liberalizing their contribution and benefit scales for fear of placing their employers at a competitive disadvantage. Indeed, states with laws which improve upon the federal standards are already encountering difficulties with the federal authorities, who refuse to extend the advantages of the credit device for such purposes. On the other hand, as more states comply with the present act, federal improvement will become more difficult, because Congress will hesitate to require the reorganization of each state system by any important amendment. Moreover, should the federal act be voided by the Supreme Court the individual state laws will be difficult to retain, not only because most of them have been made contingent upon the federal law, but also because the overemphasis which the act gives to national action will militate against state legislation.

With respect to its provisions for old age, the best and soundest part of the act is the federal grant-in-aid of 50 per cent, up to a maximum of $15 monthly per person, to states paying pensions to needy persons sixty-five years of age and over. This is stimulating states to enact new laws and to liberalize their previous provisions for the dependent aged. But the advantages of this part of the act are nullified by the unprecedented plan for old-age insurance which aims to replace the non-contributory pensions in the shortest possible time. The aged are thus also offered little security, and for the following reasons:

1. The plan cannot meet the needs of the aged for almost a generation. The average monthly annuity for most workers during the next twenty years will be less than the maximum now permitted under the state non-contributory plans. To earn an annuity of $32.50 per month a worker now forty-five years of age will have to earn at least $100 each month until he reaches sixty-five. The maximum of $85 monthly can be attained only by an employee earning $3,000 each year for forty-three years. The contributory system cannot, therefore, meet the problem of old-age dependency for the next twenty or thirty years, even assuming that our current money rates re-

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main stable. During this period the worker's compulsory contributions will afford him no additional security. The requirement of retirement from work upon the receipt of an annuity is thus utterly meaningless. No one will surrender a job for a pittance. Indeed, most needy workers will be considerably better off under the non-contributory pensions.

2. Not only will the annuity be insufficient for the insured, but the act provides nothing for the dependent wife of an annuitant. Under the non-contributory pensions a needy couple may receive up to $60 monthly under most state plans. But a man who has contributed for twenty or more years to the insurance fund will get for himself and his wife only about half the amount his neighbor and wife may receive without any contributions. This will necessitate not only additional help from the non-contributory plan but two duplicating systems to cater to the same person or family

3. The insurance funds are neither certain nor safe. Since the act creates no legal claim to benefits, there is no assurance that the annuities will be paid. Payments will depend upon each Congress. For in order to avoid additional constitutional difficulties, the act stipulates that the taxes go first into the general fund of the government. They reach the Old Age Benefit Reserve Account only as Congress makes the necessary actuarial annual appropriations. But what assurance is there that Congress will regularly allocate this money either in sufficient amounts or at all? If experience with other funds in this country and abroad offers any guide, Congress not only may be disinclined to do so but may even dissipate the funds for other purposes.

4. The act places an immediate back-breaking burden upon the younger workers. These workers will not only have to bear, as taxpayers, their share of the cost of the non-contributory pensions, but will have to provide fully for their own annuities and, in addition, pay a higher premium in order that they as workers, rather than the taxpayers as a whole, may provide for those now old and in middle age. Workers entering the system at the age of twenty when the 6 per cent rate goes into effect in 1949 will, together with their employers, pay a premium rate about 40 per cent higher than would be required for the same annuities by a private insurance company.

Of even greater significance is the act's anti-social and uneconomic base, which may aggravate the existing insecurity. The insurance plans use exclusively the reactionary revenue tax, which falls heaviest on workers. A tax on production is a tax on consumers, since employers nearly always transfer such taxes in increased prices. The Social Security Act does not utilize the federal power to tax incomes and inheritances in order to bring the financial resources of the nation into the insurance schemes, as practically all progressive social-insurance programs have done. On the contrary, it hopes to bring security to the unemployed and aged by a tax which, while relieving the well-to-do from their part of the social burden, merely divides poverty among the poor.

Instead of seeking the better-balanced economy which modern social insurance would effect, the act actually accentuates the present maldistribution of income by diminishing the purchasing power of the masses through the withdrawal of some of their immediate income and through higher prices; this is especially dangerous in the face of continued unemployment, increased state and municipal taxes, and depressed wages. Heavy pay-roll taxes inevitably react adversely on employment and wages, since they tend to curtail consumption and to increase unemployment by discouraging employers from adding to their working forces and by encouraging displacement of labor by mechanical improvements.

Grave dangers are also inherent in the huge reserves contemplated under the old-age insurance plan, provided Congress does not dissipate them for other purposes. For a great many years the contributions will exceed the benefits. The reserves will mount until they reach $47,000,000,000 in 1980. These huge funds, paying interest at 3 per cent per annum, may be invested only in government obligations, and since this sum is about $17,000,000,000 above our present outstanding indebtedness, a premium is placed on increasing the governmental debt burden. It is difficult to forecast the consequences of concentrating all governmental debt and securities in one account held and controlled by the government itself.

The Social Security Act also sets up an unnecessarily cumbersome method of administration in both old-age and unemployment insurance. Although social insurance can succeed only with the simplest structure, the framers of the Social Security Act gave no thought to this problem. They incorporated a complex administrative system difficult to carry through even in small and homogeneous countries. Unemployment insurance is coordinated neither with old-age insurance nor with relief. Two separate systems are used for unemployment insurance and old-age insurance for practically the same body of workers. Every state must duplicate the unemployment-insurance set-up of the federal government. The simple system of collection by stamps cannot be employed because the tax must be computed not only on the varied wages but also on the board and lodging, the tips and bonuses received by workers.

The unnecessary blunders in the act will react adversely on the development of a constructive social-insurance program in the United States. Its economic and social fallacies, coupled with its administrative perplexities, are bound to bring hardship to the workers and disappointment to the law's political friends. There is danger that the American people may become so disillusioned that they will cast out the entire act, good and bad, and conclude that social insurance is beyond the capacity of our government. Whereas a Supreme Court nullification of a beneficial social-security program would strengthen the case for a constitutional amendment and pave the way for a reenactment, a court decision adverse to this act might, in the face of an aroused public antagonism, deal a death blow to the entire movement for many years.

[*A second article by Mr. Epstein showing what can be done to improve the Social Security Act will appear next week.*]

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Who Killed the King?

BY LOUIS ADAMIC

ON OCTOBER 9 it will be two years since the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia at Marseilles and the fatal (apparently accidental) wounding, in connection with that *attentat,* of Foreign Minister Barthou of France.

I did not admire King Alexander. I predicted his eventual end at the hand of some assassin in consequence of his misrule more than a year before it occurred. I was shocked by the news of the outrage, but I was not surprised. None the less, ever since the horrible event, which I studied closely in the excellent news films exhibited in America, I have been puzzled by all sorts of things connected with the assassination. The incident is one of the great murder mysteries of recent years.

We cannot be sure even about the identity of the assassin. By certain marks on his body it was allegedly determined that he was Vladimir Georgieff Chernozemski, a young Macedonian *komitadji.* But I have word of rumors in the Balkans that Chernozemski is alive, and the assassin might easily have been another person. His mangled body was put away in great haste "in a Marseilles cemetery in the presence of two detectives and a gravedigger," and both the French and the Yugoslav government did everything possible to limit the investigation which was held immediately after the outrage, while they exploited the assassination for their own political ends. In Yugoslavia free discussion of the King's death was not allowed, nor could the news films be shown; and even now under the Stoyadinovich regime, when censorship is slightly relaxed in many other respects, not a word can be written about the "mystery."

I do not wonder, of course, nor does anyone else, why the assassin pulled the trigger. What puzzles me is this; why was the assassin *allowed* to kill the King? I can put my query thus: why did French officials responsible for the King's safety give the assassin almost direct aid in the commission of his deed? Or thus: who, besides the Macedonian and Croatian terrorist organization wanted the assassin to succeed and induced the French officials to make the killing of the King easy?

King Alexander's visit to Paris for the purpose of strengthening Yugoslavia's politico-military and economic relations with France was rumored throughout Europe for weeks in advance of the official announcement. Alexander was going on a mission of vast importance not only to Yugoslavia and France but, since peace or another war might be the issue, to Europe. There is no doubt that Alexander's personal secret service knew that terrorists intent on killing him had lately entered France; the King made no secret of his fear of assassination. Shortly before his departure for France he discussed with Ivan Mestrovich the poor prospects of his living much longer. The famous sculptor, who was a friend of his, has since recorded their conversation in *Nova Evropa,* one of the leading journals of Yugoslavia.

Two or three weeks before the King left for France, the Yugoslav government, no doubt by his own personal direction, requested the French government to allow it to send thirty (some say forty) Yugoslav secret agents to France to guard his life during his stay there, but the French government declined the request. Eleven days after the assassination, on October 20, 1934, the London *Daily Mail* printed a dispatch from its Belgrade correspondent, Ward Price, stating that King Alexander had expressed his fear of being murdered to Prince George of England and that Prince George had appealed to Scotland Yard, which requested the Sûreté Nationale to allow ten Scotland Yard detectives to come to France for the duration of Alexander's visit. The French authorities, the dispatch stated, had refused the request. This news story was never denied.

Immediately after the King was murdered, the Sûreté Nationale in Paris tried to throw the blame for the miserable protection of his life on the Marseilles police. But the Marseilles police declined to take the blame, and curious things began to come to light. On October 12 and 13, 1934, Paris newspapers printed the following official statement of the municipal government of Marseilles:

> Since rumors are being circulated in Paris that the municipality of Marseilles was opposed to certain measures being taken for the protection of His Majesty King Alexander, especially as regards the use of the army for the service of order, the municipality feels obliged to state that it was not consulted regarding the organization of the reception of the King; that all instructions to maintain order were issued by representatives of the Sûreté Nationale of Paris; and finally, that the Mayor of Marseilles was not invited to take part in the parade.

Simultaneously, the Prefecture of the Bouches-du-Rhône issued this public statement:

> The Sûreté Nationale alone had all the responsibility for the organization of order and protection; the Marseilles police were only the agents for the execution of that organization; and the Marseilles authorities had urged that the King's automobile be surrounded with special agents on motor cycles, but the officials of the Sûreté Nationale had rejected their recommendation.

The French government promptly removed from his post Prefect of Police Jouhannaud of Marseilles "for neglect of duty," whereupon the municipal council of Marseilles in public session on November 1, 1934, adopted a resolution of protest "against the campaign of calumny carried on against the city on the subject of responsibility

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for the assassination on October 9," and gave M. Jouhannaud the Grand Medal of the City of Marseilles.

The *Jour,* a Paris newspaper, undertook an inquiry of its own and published its findings on November 6, 1934. It said that M. Jouhannaud and his assistants had organized a special guard of fourteen agents on motor cycles. This police detail was to encircle the royal automobile and accompany it on its progress through the streets of Marseilles. But at the last moment Commissioner Sisteron, chief of the bureau charged with the protection of distinguished visitors, which is part of the Sûreté Nationale, ordered the motor cycles to stay away. He never openly admitted this charge but he gave the press the following evasive declaration: "Conscious of my duties as a state official and respectful of my chiefs, I have kept silent, and I cannot but continue silent until a definite decision is taken in regard to me."

It is now an established fact of history that twenty years earlier Archduke Franz Ferdinand was allowed to go to Sarajevo, where, as Belgrade had warned Vienna, there were plots against his life, and was given no protection on arriving there. In view of the foregoing facts in the case of King Alexander's assassination, is it not natural to conclude that someone, or some group of persons, in Paris had decided or agreed that if there was anyone in Marseilles who wanted to kill him, those responsible for his safety would do nothing to prevent the murder?

Other questions occur. Whose instructions controlled Sisteron in his order against the motor-cycle guard? Who, if anyone, paid that person or those persons? Italy? Hungary? These two countries had a chance of benefiting from Alexander's death; for whatever may be said against him, he was a good soldier and the center of the great Yugoslav military machine, with which both of them might eventually have to contend in connection with their aspirations for territories now a part of Yugoslavia.

The Nazis? Alexander was traditionally pro-French, and it is possible that German influence is becoming stronger in Yugoslavia, and the Balkans generally, because he is no longer there.

In Yugoslavia, I am informed, the following rumor is circulated—obviously by the reactionary, anti-Soviet, pro-Nazi elements in Belgrade: Someone in high authority in France who was responsible for the King's safety permitted him to be killed at the instigation of the pro-Soviet political groups in France, which hated Alexander for his obstinate refusal to recognize Russia and cooperate with France in its pro-Soviet policy, which was directed against Hitler. This tale is the most fantastic of the lot.

Much more credible is the next rumor—to give just one more—namely, that freedom of action for the assassin was bought by the great international munitions interests. King Alexander came to France in the interest of peace. One of the chief purposes of his trip was to have France force or induce Mussolini to cease his wild imperialist propaganda against Yugoslavia. If successful, Alexander might have greatly lessened the fear of imminent war and, thereby, the orders for munitions. So, says the rumor, the munitions interests had him killed! And not a few people in Yugoslavia believe this.

Yugoslavia is a small country, but by reason of its geographical position and military strength not an unimportant one in the present European set-up. It certainly is not, even without the strong-armed, shrewd Alexander, a helpless vassal state. Then why did not Yugoslavia—why does not Yugoslavia—seek or demand the solution of the "mystery"? I don't know, but I can suggest an answer.

Immediately after the King-Dictator's death the government of Yugoslavia was in chaos. The blood on the bullet-pierced tunic was not yet dry when Alexander's former yes-men began to fight among themselves for power. Chief among these was his Foreign Minister, Yevtich, who came to France with him on that fatal journey and who immediately after the assassination announced "Preserve the Franco-Yugoslav friendship!" as the King's last words. These were printed as such in Belgrade and throughout the world that same day. But no sooner were the words flashed around the globe than Yevtich, deciding that another phrase might better serve his purposes, declared that what the dying King had really said was *Chuvaite mi Yugoslaviyu!* ("Guard Yugoslavia!"), and Yugoslavia was promptly plastered with this alleged saying. As a matter of fact, before the assassination, when the King could conceivably have said that to him, Yevtich was a good distance away from him. Alexander could not have said anything to him after he was shot, for he immediately lost consciousness and never regained it. But Yevtich made everybody in Yugoslavia more or less believe that the dying King had commissioned him personally to "guard Yugoslavia"; in other words, to continue the dictatorship as he had conducted it.

In short, the outstanding item on the first page of the history of the Belgrade government after the assassination is a lie. On the next page we find an attempt by Yevtich and his government to manufacture another lie. Yevtich wanted the League of Nations to condemn Hungary and Italy, but especially Hungary, as directly and solely responsible for the assassination and thus officially to establish that Yugoslavia's internal situation had had no part in influencing the assassin. Also, Yevtich was in the main pro-French, in close contact with the dominant reactionary elements in France, and therefore did not want to do or say anything which might embarrass France. He forbade the showing in Yugoslavia of the films which all but proved that someone in France responsible for the King's safety had let him be murdered. Yevtich's enemies have long since kicked him into oblivion, but the official Yugoslav position that he established continues.

It is quite certain that no one connected with the Belgrade government had anything even remotely to do with the assassination. And it is almost clear that France as a government was not responsible for it. After all, Barthou was the second most important member of the government at that time.

Does anyone in France, apart from those responsible for the "negligence" in Marseilles, know the truth? Possibly. But if there are such persons, they—in great probability—are not free to speak. The truth might implicate God knows whom, God knows what power or head of state, and strain still further the European situation.

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Campaign Train

BY BARBARA WERTHEIM

"HERE comes the boss now," said one of the newspapermen indifferently. It was dark on the station platform with only a few lights shining through the rain. Reporters and photographers who were going along on the campaign tour stood around in slickers, talking in small groups. The President climbed on board in silence. There were no greetings; no one said anything. Only a Secret Service man standing on the rear platform, every muscle alert, his head turning this way and that, his eyes darting over the groups of men below as if to ward off any hostility, gave one a sense of excitement.

Our first stop the next morning was Thomas, a little mining town in West Virginia. Because of the rain none of us knew whether the President would take the drive through the hills that had been planned. Dr. Ross McIntire, his physician, came out on the platform, looked worriedly at the sky, shook his head as he held out his hand to the rain, and went in again. "Old Doc Mac doesn't like it," said one of the reporters. "He gets worried sick if the President gets his feet wet." But Roosevelt came out anyway, and as he climbed into the open car shrill cheers broke from the hillside, where people from miles around had been waiting patiently in the rain to see the President. Their faces as we drove by were all slightly agape with a look of delighted wonder at being visited by the nation's number one celebrity.

We made five stops at mining towns, each one bigger and grimier than the last. The crowds, too, grew in size and enthusiasm till we reached Fairmont, where there were over 15,000 massed in the station, the streets, on the bridge and house-tops. At one stop I shoved in among the crowd hoping to hear revealing comments, but all I heard was, "There he is! No, that ain't him. Sure that's him," which was no help in predicting how West Virginia's eight electoral votes would go. No distinguished guests were in our party, but just before each station we would make a short stop and several cigar-smoking, well-fed gentlemen in thick overcoats would climb on. These, in the words of the irreverent press, were the "local boll weevils"; they would then appear on the rear platform, smiling and graciously waving to the crowd, which was so proud to see its home-state leaders traveling with the President.

At these stops the newspapermen would rush back to hear the President express his joy at seeing smoke coming out of the chimneys again and tell about that telegram he had "just received" announcing the first year in fifty-five with no national-bank failures. As he finished, everyone would clamber back on board, disappear into separate compartments, and immediately fill the train with the sound of clicking typewriters. Nearing Pittsburgh we wondered why no release of the speech was forthcoming, the delay, some said, being to safeguard against a possible Landon spy wiring its contents on to Al Smith in New York. As a matter of fact, although there were many pro-Landon papers represented, there were very few pro-Landon journalists. One reporter told me that while 80 per cent of the newspaper owners are Republican, 80 per cent of the individual journalists are pro-Roosevelt. And there is the story of the still unpublished poll taken by the *Herald Tribune* of fifty editorial employees, which showed forty-four for the President. When one of the correspondents said he was going to stay on the train and listen to the Pittsburgh speech over the radio in order that the enthusiasm of the crowd might not color his story, I asked why he wanted to be so objective. "When you're a New Dealer writing for a Republican paper," he said, "you have to be as objective as hell."

Judging from the reception Pittsburgh gave to Roosevelt, Pennsylvania, which has been steadfastly Republican in every election since Lincoln, stands a good chance to go Democratic for the first time this November. Hardly listening to what the President said, the crowd cheered their heads off, blew whistles, and jangled cow-bells whenever he paused for breath. Once when he said, "And during the late war we piled up a national debt of 25 billions," the crowd answered, "Hooray!" And when Governor Earle gave his list of Pennsylvania bad men—the Mellons, Pew, Ware—the crowd delightedly roared back "Boo!" to each name, ending with the richest, fruitiest boo of all when the Governor, drawing out the final *s* into a long hiss, cried "the du Ponts!" As the band played the Star Spangled Banner at the end, and the President stood erect, his profile immobile and stern, he looked (consciously perhaps?) not unlike one of those heads of Washington carved out of a mountain. Just then an aide nudged him, and without looking down the President reached for his hat and folded it across his bosom in the proper gesture of patriotic reverence. An almost imperceptible move, but it made him once more a mortal. Everywhere we went, with his sumptuous voice and dominating presence, he was invariably the best speaker on the program.

In Jersey City the next morning the reporters' theme song, "Hey, Bill, what do you estimate the crowd?" was brought into full play as we drove through the incredible demonstration staged by Mayor Hague, who was making show of his loyalty to the man he called a "weakling" when he led the "Stop Roosevelt" movement in Chicago in 1932. As we crawled through the three miles of shrieking, flag-waving school children (half of Hague's turnout was below voting age), we were heckled with such remarks as "Aw, it's oney de press . . . say, ya got it pretty soft . . . gimme a lift, mister? . . . hey, mister, take my pitcha . . . ooh, lookit, a woman repawter, hi-ya, toots."

Back in New York no machine organization turned out the crowds which sprang up impromptu to cheer the President. Except on Park Avenue. There the sidewalks were no more crowded than usual, and the only heads peering out the windows were the servants'. It called to mind the story, which no one would swear was not apocryphal, of Knox in San Francisco. As he was driving through the streets, someone in the crowd yelled, "Hurrah for Roosevelt!" The cry was taken up and Knox began to get red in the face until a Republican committeewoman driving with him leaned over and said, "Never mind, Colonel, they're only working people."

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Issues and Men

BY OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD

AS USUALLY happens about this time in a Presidential campaign, I am receiving inquiries about how I, personally, am going to vote. It is quite usual, too, to meet people who say, "Well, there is a lot I don't like about Roosevelt and his Administration, but the all-important thing this year is to keep Landon out. Don't you think so?" That has a most familiar sound, for in every election there are multitudes who vote with an eye to the immediate peril and without attention to the longer vision. It is partly because of this that the two old corrupt and reactionary parties have held together as long as they have.

This year the appeal to reelect Roosevelt meets with much liberal response because there is no question that the sins of the Administration and its lamentable administrative failures are in considerable degree offset by the liberal orientation of the government as a whole. No one can deny that though there has been maddening abuse of the appointive power purely for spoils purposes, an exceptionally fine body of men has been drawn into the government service. No one can question the great service rendered to the country in committing it—if haltingly and inadequately—to the principles of social security and the right of every citizen to a job, and to a humane relief policy; no President hereafter will ever seek to do away with social insurance. Innumerable social workers and friends of labor are also ready to forgive the President for all his shortcomings out of gratitude to him for writing upon our statute books the principle of collective bargaining through representatives of labor's own choosing. Still other liberals will vote for the President because of their belief that the election of Landon would mean a step toward fascism.

These are all, save the last, sound arguments, with which I cannot quarrel if they satisfy those who advance them. But I feel that it is not true that the election of Landon would do more to advance fascism than would that of Roosevelt. If Roosevelt is elected and continues his reforms, the embattled masters of capital will be much more ready to undermine our institutions than if they find a fairly obedient servant in Mr. Landon. Moreover, Mr. Roosevelt's rapid militarization of the country has created just the weapon for fascists to use if they should come to power. Look at Spain and cry, *Absit omen!* The power of the army and navy lobby in Washington can hardly be exaggerated. Again, Mr. Roosevelt's challenging of big business and then seeking to compromise with it and to woo it to his standard has weakened his position. As Ernest Lindley has pointed out in his "Half Way with Roosevelt," the President erred completely in not realizing that he must break with the great capitalists entirely if he would achieve his program, that no compromise with them was possible. The very title of Mr. Lindley's book is the most damaging indictment of the Roosevelt regime—it has been "halfway" at all times. But to this my inquisitors will reply: "Better halfway than none of the way."

If we look beyond this election, what hope is there that the Democratic Party will continue liberal and progressive after Mr. Roosevelt retires? I will insult no one's intelligence by commenting on the foolish rumors spread by crazy men and women that the President will proclaim martial law and call off this year's elections, or that he will demand a third term in 1940. I left the Democratic Party years ago because it was obvious that there could be no hope of its becoming a genuine reform party when it was composed in part of the reactionary Southern politicians, in part of the corrupt Northern municipal machines. If Roosevelt's successor should prove a real and not a halfway reformer, we should see the party disintegrate rapidly.

While I admit that the decision is not an easy one, I shall not cast my vote for Mr. Roosevelt, much as I personally like him and grateful as I am for the orientation of his Administration. My reason is not merely my distrust of the party behind him or my feeling that it is absolutely necessary to encourage a third-party movement. I could not conscientiously vote for an Administration which has so militarized the country and given us for military and naval purposes a budget for this fiscal year of about $1,200,000,000. I agree with Secretary Hull that war is "a cruel mill," whose grist is "death to youth, death to hope, death to civilization." Each one of us has his paramount issue. Mine is this question of war and peace and the saving of civilization. I feel that Mr. Roosevelt, unwittingly, if you please, despite his great peace speech at Chautauqua, has set us on the road to war and to the "death of civilization." As I thus feel, so must I vote. If I am charged with thereby helping to instal reaction in Washington, I can only cite once more my most threadbare but my dearest quotation. It was Wendell Phillips who said that he stood at all costs for human liberty and left the working out of the details to "Almighty God."

So I shall vote for Norman Thomas. Not as a member of the Socialist Party, for that I have never been, but because I think Norman Thomas the most civilized and the most enlightened of the candidates, and the soundest on the issue that concerns me most. Of course if anybody should put a pistol to my head and bid me choose between Landon and Roosevelt, I should vote for the President without a second's hesitation.

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BROUN'S PAGE

AL SMITH'S Carnegie Hall speech was a shocking performance. It was really worse than the Liberty League address. In that, at least, there was the pretense of certain idealistic concepts. But at Carnegie Hall Al reduced the whole problem of his political position to a sort of accountant's game as to whether he had done more for Roosevelt or Roosevelt more for him.

I don't know whether the quality of arrogance has grown on Al in recent years. It was not so palpable in the past. But in those days Smith actually was engaged in pursuits in which his real talents had some sway. To face present facts fairly, it must be admitted that Governor Smith has made no significant contribution to his community for a good many years.

He put a vast amount of emotion into his campaign for the Presidency in 1928. Of course the result was a disappointment; worse than that, the loss of the Southern states was a personal humiliation. Smith has never recovered his poise. But in lashing out he gives most of his blows to people who befriended him. For instance, there was the extraordinary situation in regard to the Carnegie Hall speech that Alfred M. Landon and Herbert Hoover sat side by side and listened to it over the radio. Governor Landon made a public statement thanking Smith for his services. Herbert Hoover allowed his gratitude to go without words. Perhaps he felt that it was still a little soon to thumb over the wounds of 1928.

Smith's speech had a very small amount of deeply reasoned political or economic theory. It was more largely a discussion of underlying personal-motivation stuff, a little as if Louis Sobol were to write an article entitled Why I Am Not Speaking to Walter Winchell. It was, indeed, as petty and as personal as that. It seems to me that the entire Al Smith address could be summed up in the following two paragraphs from Carnegie Hall:

> Then, of course, there was suggested also that I was a little bit disturbed because I wasn't offered a position in the Cabinet. Well, that is silly. That is about as silly as anything could be. Why, as a matter of fact, I couldn't afford to take a position in the Cabinet. I couldn't live in Washington and give all my time at the salary that a Cabinet office pays, but there is one thing that I could have done, and one thing that I always was ready to do, and would not have hindered a moment of my business time. I was always ready to give advice, but I was never asked for it.
>
> The fact of the matter is, I only saw the President once since the day he was inaugurated. He asked me two questions. He asked me what I thought of the appointment of Jimmy Hoey. I told him I thought it was a good appointment, that Mr. Hoey was a friend of mine and he is an upstanding citizen. Then he inquired for the grandchildren, and of course I told him they were wonderful.

The beginning of the break between Roosevelt and Smith occurred before Mr. Roosevelt went into the White House. They say in Albany that Al was more or less prepared to take over and run Roosevelt's first administration as Governor. Smith undoubtedly felt that Roosevelt was his own personal protege, and while he had a fondness for him this was mixed with a slight measure of contempt. He didn't think the Harvard boy really had very much on the ball.

For his soul's salvation Roosevelt had to thrust Smith aside even if he took poorer counsel or none at all. The whole relationship had been one in which Roosevelt would have been compelled to remain in the role of pupil. It can hardly be denied that Al Smith's advice on New York State affairs would have been highly competent. But that doesn't necessarily go for federal matters. And in any case it was Roosevelt's administration and up to him to take the responsibility and the rap.

Al is merely clowning when he seeks credence for the belief that President Roosevelt surrounded himself with dim and obscure persons. Governor Smith in his Carnegie Hall address asked rhetorically: "Who is Ickes? Who is Wallace? Who is Hopkins, and, in the name of all that is good and holy, who is Tugwell and where did he blow from?"

The paper records that this sally brought applause and laughter. Those are not difficult commodities to command in a political audience. Still Smith had to stoop pretty far to play for his laugh. Ickes has been a familiar figure in progressive politics for a number of years; his name was not unknown to Al Smith. It is possible that at the time of his appointment Governor Smith had never heard of Henry Wallace. But that would argue a parochial quality on the part of Smith. After all, Wallace's father was a Republican Cabinet member and the present Secretary of Agriculture is probably one of the best-known men who have ever held that post.

It was Al Smith's proud boast when Governor of New York that he was wholly familiar with the educational set-up of the community. In that event Rexford Guy Tugwell should not have been an altogether outlandish name. A considerable amount of publicity beats upon Columbia University, and when one of its best-known professors is snatched away for the public service it can hardly be held that the country's Chief Executive is drawing the rabbits out of a hat.

The final flourish in Al's Carnegie Hall address comes at the very end when he says, "I firmly believe that the remedy for all the ills that we are suffering from today is the election of Alf M. Landon."

In saying this Al is practically saying that Hoover had the right idea in 1928. And so in taking a walk Governor Smith has completed a full circle; not only has he left the camp of his friends but he has fallen right into the citadel of his enemies.

HEYWOOD BROUN

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BOOKS *and the* ARTS

The Season in Snow

BY MARYA ZATURENSKA

See how the declining year disrobes itself of light,
The green, the ruddy gold, the sunny blue
To the fixed seasons true:
The rose fades from the hour, dissolves in cloudy white,
White, white the beautiful hour, silent and white
Immure our lives to changing atmosphere.
The cold descends like brightness from the air,
Fair, rare the aging year grows, white and fair
With the stripped garlands on her changing hair.

Let us sing Winter, the fair, unbeloved:
Only the fastidious mind is finally moved
To love her naked, bleak, and delicate line
When time's fixed touch is careful to refine
The chill and difficult world where loveliness
Divests herself of her rose-bordered dress,

And waits on memory, sees closed rivers sleep,
Follows the frozen clouds' authentic fleece
With large, doomed eyes of peace,
And sees the cool, bright-plumaged wings of the snow
And men with muffled footsteps walking slow.

The Career of Brandeis

BRANDEIS. THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF AN AMERICAN IDEAL. By Alfred Lief. Stackpole Sons, New York and Harrisburg. $3.

MR. LIEF has done a serious and searching study of Justice Brandeis's career, apropos probably of his subject's fast-approaching eightieth birthday (November 13). That Mr. Lief writes *con amore,* with prejudice in favor of his subject, is evident. Yet it is also true that he has presented the other side of the unending controversies in which the Justice played a part until he went on the Supreme Court. He has given to the fight against Mr. Brandeis's confirmation as Justice no less than fifty-one pages, two chapters, and has scrupulously repeated the arguments against the confirmation, not omitting the assaults upon Mr. Brandeis's personal character and the allegation that he had betrayed former clients. Mr. Lief seeks to emulate Mr. Brandeis's kindliness toward his opponents by the respect with which he treats those who attacked his hero, even when they were obviously in the wrong. The book is long and not always easy reading, perhaps because of the necessity of compressing so much into even this space, and at times because of a rather staccato style.

But the record is of an amazingly full and useful life, and no future student of Brandeis and his times can possibly overlook it. Others may draw a clearer personal portrait of Mr. Brandeis than is given us by Mr. Lief, who has plainly preferred to let the Justice stand out through his actions and his words; others will doubtless characterize and evaluate the Justice with bolder and more penetrating strokes of the pen. It will be difficult, however, for anyone to give us a better understanding of the extraordinary extent of Justice Brandeis's activities and influence upon our national life. Whether anyone will ever be able to picture his career in all its ramifications and estimate the extent of his contribution to the national welfare is questionable. Mr. Lief is entitled to gratitude for treating the Justice as what he is—a great American rather than a great Jew.

Certainly this is a career, whatever its faults, to hearten all who believe in democratic processes. Brandeis fought his own way upward by sheer ability, though not in the face of great obstacles, for he made a multitude of friends as well as enemies wherever he went and labored. He was able to avoid most of the pitfalls which confront the successful lawyer because from the beginning he set apart some of his time for unpaid public service, and because he was soon able to choose what clients he would accept. As he accumulated means he gave more time to public service for the city, the state, and the nation. He fought the public utilities, beat the proposed merger between the Boston and Maine and New Haven railroads, rendered invaluable service to organized labor, and gave his support to every worthy reform movement. He created the savings-bank insurance system in Massachusetts, which has grown so steadily and soundly, but has unfortunately not spread over the whole country—he considers this, Mr. Lief says, his "greatest achievement." He fought President Taft in the Ballinger case, and although the President decided against the Brandeis contentions he decided wrongly, and his political fate was sealed by this blunder—in conjunction with others and the tariff bill he made into a law. By 1910 Brandeis was a national figure and a leader in the fight against the trusts.

Finally, Mr. Lief admirably reviews Mr. Brandeis's triumph in the pioneering Oregon minimum-wage case and his career on the Supreme Court, and leaves him with us as a mellow octogenarian, with unshaken faith in humanity and in the ability of *Homo Americanus* to master his problems without resorting to dictatorship and destroying personal liberty. Visitors might come to his home utterly disheartened by the world outside. They found—and find—him cheerful, serene, philosophical, with spirit undaunted.

OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD

Crusading for Co-op

CO-OP: A NOVEL OF LIVING TOGETHER. By Upton Sinclair. Farrar and Rinehart. $2.50.

IN ONLY one respect, the concreteness of its social program, does "Co-op" differ from the bulk of Upton Sinclair's earlier work. Though Sinclair has always regarded fiction as a medium of political persuasion, it was to the ideals of social justice rather than to any one panacea that he dedicated his novels. Now, however, that he has become an advocate of EPIC, he has written a novel about the benefits of co-operative societies. His new book shows the familiar indignation at the system of exploitation, but the course of every event and every character is detoured into the history of a cooperative in California. Bankers, hobos, Communists, rebellious children of good family—there are eighty-five characters—are all

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sucked into the orbit of this brotherhood, where they learn that by pooling their labor and their resources they can obtain their necessities through a simple system of barter. In this way relief is made unnecessary, and the unemployed can be put to work without competing against private industry.

The story demonstrates the method of building a cooperative, from its humble origin in the dream of Charlie Day, resident of a California Hooverville, to a flourishing establishment of several thousand members. There are disheartening difficulties, of course, such as red-baiting, the hostility of business men, and sabotage by government agencies. But, under the leadership of Day and Sig Soren, "ex-sailor, ex-convict, and builder of humanity," and with the help of Mabel Saugus, a Socialist who has inherited an income, the co-operative wins the confidence of some local bankers and of a good part of the community. Nevertheless, it appears that the experiment is doomed to failure unless it is able to produce enough to supply its needs, and for this a large grant of money from the government must be obtained. With this query—will Roosevelt subsidize cooperatives in America?—the book ends, and Sinclair leaves his co-op to the mercy of history. By its own industry and with the aid of rich men of good-will, the Self-Help Exchange (as it is called in this novel) was able to thrive. But once it ran up against the basic economy of the country, its destiny passed out of its own hands.

Under such creative restrictions as its political thesis imposes, one could hardly expect "Co-op" to have a more fluid and more complex humanity. The narrative unfolds with the velocity and fervor of a crusade, and though the characters have the engaging seriousness of people passionately devoted to a cause, they lack emotional integration. If "Co-op" adds little to the world of fiction, it displays, nevertheless, Upton Sinclair's unabated powers as a propagandist.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

With Apologies to the Bear

MAINLAND. By Gilbert Seldes. Charles Scribner's Sons. $3.

TO review this book as angrily, as noisily, and as unfairly as it is written would surely profit nobody. It is necessary, however, to say that it is not useful social criticism and that, as journalism, it is diffuse, verbose, and more irritating than provocative.

Like the bear, Mr. Seldes went over the mountain to see what he could see. What'd he see? The other side of the mountain . . . was all the bear could see. The book contains occasional passages of accurate and intelligent perception, not, however, particularly novel. For the most part it is an astonishingly naive, pseudo-patriotic, tub-thumping appeal to the American middle class. In his glib survey of history, economics, and the arts Mr. Seldes sees many things that aren't there, overlooks a number of fundamental problems that have occupied more serious students, misrepresents by quotations taken out of context a score or so of his contemporaries, and concludes with the following triumphantly proclaimed News from Nowhere: That America is not Europe, and that even Marx didn't think it was. That neither American capitalism nor American political democracy is quite done for. That American capitalism can be "saved" for a while without resorting to fascism; that possibly it can be somewhat liberalized by loosening the grip of finance capital on the forces of production—the Ford idea—and by protecting civil liberties.

As Mr. Seldes may have heard, the current effort to establish a Farmer-Labor Party proceeds on similar assumptions, and revolutionaries of all kinds are going along with this effort as a practical means of serving the masses. The expectation of radicals is that in this process the workers, farmers, and a section of the middle class will be educated through victory and defeat; that a mass basis will be matured for the ultimate revolutionary struggle which, they think, the unfolding of successive capitalist crises is bound to precipitate. (Mr. Seldes, incidentally, admits that if American capitalism fails to parallel Russia's rising production line, that will clinch the argument for communism.) Mr. Seldes is equally trite when he proclaims that a workers' dictatorship involves serious and costly suppressions of individual liberties, and that any dictatorship, including the workers' state established in Russia, has a definite tendency to perpetuate itself, and to develop internal class divisions, instead of "withering away" into the classless society.

In his initial "Countercharge" of 176 rather hysterical pages Mr. Seldes denounces the "treason of the intellectuals," including Dreiser, Van Wyck Brooks, Glenway Wescott, and others. These persons will save themselves needless annoyance by skipping this section, which Mr. Seldes summarizes as follows:

> That the intellectual attack upon America has been ill-natured or ignorant or both; that the literary belittling of America has carried forward a propaganda for the destruction of the American political system and the abasement of the American standard of living; that the intellectuals have made no effort to understand the variety and excellence of life in America; and that their constant attack has left America helpless before the impact of hostile European systems.

Does Mr. Seldes speak as an intellectual? Yes and no. Presumably, Mr. Seldes turned in his card in that union when, after covering the intellectual front for the old *Dial,* he turned to intellectual-spoofing in the columns of the *Saturday Evening Post.* There, as in the present book, he has done much to soothe the hurt feelings occasioned by the alleged failure of intellectuals to establish "the moral grandeur of the pioneer, the nobility of the business man, the fine enraptured cultivation of his wife, or even the average decency of the American people." But Mr. Seldes's value to Mr. Lorimer and his prestige in the eyes of the middle-class readers of "Mainland" derive from his standing as an "intellectual" of some sort. And unquestionably Mr Seldes regards himself as a member of the elite—in fact, on page 274 he says as much. Having read Nietzsche, he says, "I am not aware of a sense of brotherhood with every other human being. It is, in fact, because all men are *not* my brothers, that I would prefer to live in a society which treated them honorably and decently." A class society, in other words; Mr. Seldes makes this abundantly clear by quoting Hamlet's injunction to Polonius to treat the players, not after their desert, but "after your own honor and dignity," a passage in which the feudal philosophy of life is admirably epitomized.

I can only remark that I have met truck drivers and tailors who, without benefit of Nietzsche, would feel toward Mr. Seldes precisely as he feels toward them. That honor, dignity, and even a certain pride and condescension might reside in any other class is an idea that the middle-class mind finds hard to grasp.

Mr. Seldes is very middle class, quite sincere, and intellectually much sloppier than most of the intellectuals whom he attacks. I don't think he meant deliberately to misquote Anatole France or to misrepresent the "Communist Manifesto" in his footnote on page 129; he just couldn't get it through his head—that, and a good many other things.

JAMES RORTY

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Tactics for Consumers

THE DECLINE AND RISE OF THE CONSUMER. By Horace M. Kallen. D. Appleton-Century Company. $2.75.

IN THE epilogue to his book Dr. Kallen remarks that "forecasts should be left to weather men, statisticians, and fortune-tellers." Being a philosopher, Dr. Kallen should therefore have been content to deny himself the pleasure of gazing into the crystal ball. Unfortunately he was not, and his final chapter, in which he lyrically describes the good life in a cooperative world, is a dead give-away of some of the essential weaknesses of this economic pattern and of the willingness of even one of its more objective expounders to delude himself. According to Dr. Kallen's prophesy, another World War (which will start in 1942) will be required before the international cooperative state can be established. The carefully analyzed history of the cooperative movement which Dr. Kallen presents, its rise during times of depression, its decline when the business cycle turns upward, confirms the view that a world-wide cataclysm may be necessary to give cooperation its great chance. But today, only six years before the date set for the concerted attack by Japan and Germany on Soviet Russia, consumers are unorganized either in or outside cooperatives. How they will achieve the necessary strength to defeat fascism and communism Dr. Kallen does not adequately explain. In any event, workers of the world, or in the cliché of cooperation, consumers, arise! The pattern for the cooperative Utopia follows closely the one laid down by Edward Bellamy in "Looking Backwards." Add the words "consumer" and "cooperation" to the Bellamy plan, and you have Dr. Kallen's. In other words, Dr. Kallen has taken the idealist's Utopia and made of it a reality through the magic of consumer cooperation. This is the kind of wishful thinking that makes so many cooperators unable properly to evaluate the movement.

The book itself is a valuable addition to consumer literature. Besides a complete description of cooperatives both in the United States and abroad, we have here social and economic history interpreted in terms of the consumer. In scope and in treatment Dr. Kallen's study is impressive. But his exaggeration of the potentialities of the cooperative movement is apt to alienate those who cannot accept it as the sole panacea for all the world's ills.

RUTH BRINDZE

Natives of the Delta

GREEN MARGINS. By E. P. O'Donnell. Houghton Mifflin Company. $2.50.

MR. O'DONNELL'S Houghton Mifflin Fellowship prize novel refreshes one's dwindling faith in literary prizes. "Green Margins" introduces a new writer of unquestionable competence whose talent has not been worn thin by repetition. He is a fluent narrator and an unusually vivid observer of a submerged section of American life.

The scene of the novel is the Mississippi Delta country, about ninety miles down the river from New Orleans. The warm abundance of this alluvial region is reflected in the richness and variety of its inhabitants. Here the Cajuns, descendants of French Acadian wanderers, mix with Slavs, Negroes, Italians, and Filipinos to form a population as bewildering and colorful as the tropical vegetation by which it is nourished. The wealth of this land, its abundant plant and animal life, is restored to fulness and splendor in Mr. O'Donnell's imagistic prose. The novelist's most impressive achievement consists in his sure control of this riotous beauty.

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If Mr. O'Donnell's characters are not quite so effectively portrayed as their environment, it is not because he lacks either sensitivity or ambition. He is too receptive to the multiplicity of moods in an undisciplined personality, and this results at once in a tendency to over-explore the possibilities of temperament and in a failure of definition. The vagaries of Sister Kalavich, the central character of the story, are traced in all their intricate ramifications; she is as wilful and unsubdued as a tropical storm, as defiant as the river on whose green margins she lives; but she remains indistinct, after 500 pages, because the novelist cannot detach himself from her inability to understand herself. She is a remarkable creature, this young rebel against church, home, and convention. Her first child, a defiant gesture of freedom, never knew its father because Sister loathed his tameness and escaped his plea to make things right by marrying her. Much of this unmoral spirit, so different from the prudery of her father Tony and the lazy indifference of her brother Mocco, she had inherited from Grampaw, who lived across the river with his dreams of organizing an association of fishermen to fight the exploiters from the city. When she went to live with Grampaw, Sister discovered a new world. She learned to read Voltaire and to assert her "queerness," which had become traditional among the folk, as a human right. For a brief interlude Sister was softened by the New Orleans manners of Loretta Dobrovich, only to rediscover her hatred of conventional forms. Nor was the influence of René Davidson, the painter, who was forgetting Paris on the Delta, final. All the years of loneliness and change were a preparation for a return to Mitch Holt, native of the Delta, powerful and untamable like herself.

But the characters are interesting for what they do, instinctively and inarticulately, rather than for what they think, in their confused introspective moments. When Mitch wrestles alligators or smuggles skins or seduces women he is most alive; when Sister weaves fishing nets or struggles with the fields she seems more real than when she speculates about the meaning of destiny. Mr. O'Donnell is at his best when describing nature and physical action; when he attempts to look through the Delta people, his story follows conventional fictional patterns.

SAMUEL SILLEN

A Philosophy of Politics

POLITICS, WHO GETS WHAT, WHEN, HOW. By Harold D. Lasswell. Whittlesey House. $2.50.

THIS new book offers to uninitiated readers an opportunity to become acquainted with the orientations and formulas that Harold Lasswell has been elaborating for several years. Lasswell's aim is to substitute for liberal-moralistic and Marxist-deterministic criteria of scientific analysis some more comprehensive and elastic intellectual patterns. These patterns are not meant to exert any formative influence on political reality; neither are they devised for the exclusive sake of knowledge. They are tentative organs of orientation, ingenious feelers that may warn those who know how to use them of the trend of political events, so that places of hiding or means of personal adjustment may be accordingly designed. Lasswell tries to integrate and to mellow the Marxist conception of class interests with psychological criteria that proceed from the assumption that man is determined in his actions by his individual personality, his peculiar attitudes, and his specific skill. What men are seeking for, he maintains, is a place as high as possible in the hierarchy of deference, income, and safety. Those who get the most of these values are the elite.

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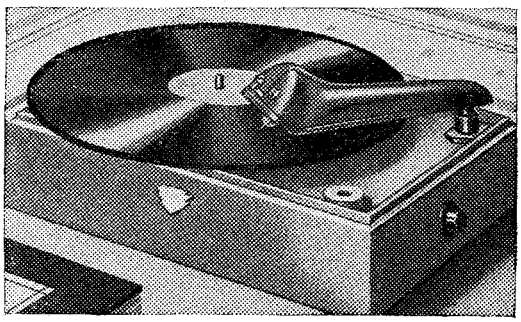

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Politics is the art of getting the most; the study of politics is the analysis of how the most is got.

Obviously this position, stimulating as it is, calls for many objections. Politics, as Lasswell understands it, embraces in itself the activity of the social and economic, as well as of the strictly political, elite. The problem is complicated by the approaches that the author suggests, and the book is merely the outline of a possible science. As long as the project remains in blueprints, Lasswell is the best qualified to take care of it, but when the definite treatise comes to be written, the chapter on violence wil lhave to be intrusted to a strategist, the chapter on goods to an economist, and so on.

The author is at home when he is studying personality; he is a first-rate psychologist who for some strange reason wraps his insight in psychoanalytical elusiveness. Unfortunately, he forgets that the science of politics must consider not only those who get, but those who lose; unless its function is merely the conscientious and systematic bookkeeping of what somebody gets, with a small percentage for registration fees.

In the portion of his book concerned with problems of our day, Lasswell advances some remarkable ideas about the revolutions running through the world and their possible arrival on these shores. All modern revolutions, he hints, including the Russian, represent the emergence of the small middle class, or, as he calls it, the middle-income skill groups. Increasing groups of intellectuals mix with workers trained in every kind of skill, including propaganda and violence. The revolution of the proletarians, if it will come at all, is still far away. The emergence of the middle-income skill groups will most probably occur in this country too, Lasswell assumes. Possibly, he thinks, without violent upheavals.

It would be unfair to press Lasswell with more questions, asking him whether he is for or against this trend, and which of the various possible outcomes he prefers. Since the coming of the two great modern revolutions, the traditional mild liberalism of some outstanding American social scientists has been constantly moving toward a clever non-committalism. I do not think that this non-committalism is equivalent to opportunism. It is perhaps the suspense and the twisting upon itself of social science in an era which, as Lasswell repeats on almost every page, is one of complete insecurity. And I am even less inclined to think of opportunism when I consider how irritating this attitude is to all those who take extreme sides in politics. Lasswell is too intelligent not to know that if fascism ever came to this country, he would quickly find himself in a concentration camp.

MAX ASCOLI

DRAMA

Mauvais Quart d'Heure

THEATRICAL entrepreneurs commonly assume—probably with some justification—that the higher centers of the brain do not begin to function until after October 1. Apparently, however, the nerves can be counted on to respond a little before that date, and certainly the two new English shockers, "Night Must Fall" (Ethel Barrymore Theater) and "Love from a Stranger" (Fulton), are at least better in their own way than any other play of the season has been in its. Both come here after highly successful runs in London, and both can be guaranteed to give even the sophisticated spectator at least a *mauvais quart d'heure*. The last phrase, inci-

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dentally, is used advisedly, since both—especially the second—are a bit slow for two acts and depend upon the agony of the last fifteen or twenty minutes to satisfy their audiences.

As all crime fanciers know, the mode of the moment is for either the highly intellectual puzzle or the study in abnormal psychology. Neither of the present plays goes in for deduction, and so both concern themselves with killers who kill in a state of high ecstasy and who explain to the audience just what the subtler pleasures of murder are. You may take your choice between an ingratiating bell boy, beloved by old ladies, who cuts off heads because it gives him the feeling that he is somebody after all, and a be-tweeded, pipe-smoking Canadian who marries girls with money, partly because it is a well-paying business, partly because there is nothing which gives one so delightful a sense of power as to realize that what one holds in one's arms was a woman a moment ago but is now only a *thing*. At the same time you will be choosing between a last act in which an old lady—so extremely disagreeable that you don't mind—is smothered in her wheel chair and a last act in which a wife, suddenly realizing for the first time that her husband is a notorious sadist, an account of whose exploits she has just been compelled to read aloud to him, holds him off with a series of cock-and-bull stories until the rescuers get there. "Night Must Fall" is the first, "Love from a Stranger" the second, and I must confess that at both I enjoyed the ambivalent pleasure of being scared out of my wits.

It is a well-known fact that English thrillers are a bit less hectic and also a bit less irresponsible than the American ones, rarely going in for trapdoors, clutching hands, or other such fripperies. As a matter of fact, both of the present pieces play for the opposite effect by arranging that all the attendant circumstances, as well as the central characters themselves, shall seem on the surface as stodgily commonplace as possible; and if the result is to make the first half of each seem a bit plodding, one gets the compensating advantage of really knowing at the end what it was all about. Emlyn Williams, well-remembered here for his hair-raising performance of a few years ago in "Criminal at Large," is the boyish villain of "Night Must Fall," and Frank Vosper, another popular English actor, is the bluff, good-fellow murderer in the second. If I had to choose between the two plays I should probably find the balance tipped in favor of the first by the presence of the suppressed girl who loves the bell boy even after she has discovered his little weakness. Others, perhaps, would prefer the sinister mystery of the peroxide bottles in the second.

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

The Federal Theater's "Project No. 891" notes with some unction that "Horse Eats Hat" (Maxine Elliott's Theater) is a twentieth-century adaptation of an old Labiche farce which, apparently, was concerned with the efforts of a determined young simpleton to replace the macerated hat of a lady of quality. Edwin Denby and Orson Welles are responsible for the text and clearly prefer Labiche's livestock and millinery to his comedy; but they come bearing gifts of their own. The notion of translating the old French play into surrealist slapstick might have proved amusing had Mr. Welles not elected to submerge it in costume and décor and to stifle the musical score in an obliterating hubbub. A small army of masqueraders are suffered to pursue one another in and out of doorways; fountains are turned loose; props are sent crashing; chairs collapse; and farce flies in all directions, as broad as it is long (five acts, a prologue, and an intermission devoted, among other things, to antiphonal responses between a circus cornettist and a nickelodeon). In the end the deliberate use of bathos and disorder is no less tiresome

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for being deliberate, though the venture as a whole is not without flashes of lively spontaneous fancy.

Unfortunately "Bright Honor" puts in its appearance at the Forty-eighth Street Theater a week after Mr. Viertel's "So Proudly We Hail." It carries forward the same problem with a restraint and skill that cancel the Cromwell vehicle on every score except that of violence. It is to be regretted, however, that Charles Powers, who plays the recalcitrant cadet, is unable to achieve the authority of Richard Cromwell in a role that should, by all rights, require considerably less of the actor.

B. B.

FILMS

Fun in Flanders

A NEW theater has been opened in New York with the design of proving to interested persons that the studios of Europe are once more, after several years of faltering and eclipse, a challenge to Hollywood. The inaugural program of this theater, named rather unpleasantly the Filmarte, offers "a haven from all that is philistinism in the movie-at-large" and "a rendezvous for the cinema devotee to whom films are something more than an innocuous diversion." The Battle of the Films, with all of Europe on one side and all of Hollywood on the other, is to my mind something of a bore; but this does not prevent my being glad that the facilities for seeing foreign films have been increased, and it certainly does not discourage me from saying that the Filmarte's first picture, "La Kermesse Héroïque," is one of the most diverting I have ever watched, innocuous or noxious as the case may be.

It comes with a grand prize from France, and its director, Jacques Feyder, may well be the successor to René Clair for whom we have been looking. The scene is a Flemish village and the date is 1616; and the theme, while generally reminiscent of "Lysistrata," is better stated in the immortal sentence of Henry Fielding concerning Letitia Snap, who would have been ravished by Mr. Fireblood "if she had not, by a timely compliance, prevented him." While the trembling burghers of Boom are busy with a foolish piece of strategy against the approaching soldiers of Philip II, their women prepare to meet the Spaniards considerably more than halfway—with wine at the gates and with a key to the village which unlocks everything from the Town Hall down to the smallest bedroom there is. The result is peaceful and blissful occupation for a night, with the troops moving off the next morning wreathed in flowers and smiles, and with the burghers blindly congratulating themselves upon the success of their strategy. The film as a whole is deliciously high-spirited, and its many details are directed with fine care toward a comic end which leaves everything in Boom exactly as it was before, only more so. The acting of Françoise Rosay as the mayor's wife is alone worth going miles to see. But perhaps it is more to the point to speak of the way the entire cast wears its clothes. I have seldom seen a more convincing costume piece, and the reason seems to be that nobody is aware that he has stepped out of a seventeenth-century Low Country painting; or if he is, then the fact amuses him somewhat as Hals's people are amused—if that is what they are laughing at—by their ridiculous rig. The clothes are worn, in other words, both naturally and with art.

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And thus "La Kermesse Héroïque" becomes a satire no less upon the stilted costume picture than upon the male vanity which is ostensibly its target. It becomes in addition, because it is good comedy, a commentary upon all of life which experience permits us to know. But if nothing else it will be remembered by those who see it as an extraordinarily finished film.

It was preceded on the program by a brief and simple but very moving piece, "Millions of Us," in which a young unemployed American worker learns the importance of being a picket instead of a scab.

The authenticity of the costumes in "Romeo and Juliet" (Astor) has been much advertised, along with the care bestowed by every responsible person upon such things as the scenery and the architecture. The success of the film—for it is successful as "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was not—can better be attributed, however, to Shakespeare and to Norma Shearer. Leslie Howard's Romeo is at best an understatement; at its worst he is lost in the mazes of a too veritable Verona, whose streets swallow him up and whose palace gardens are so extensive that as he walks away from Juliet's balcony the poetry he has been speaking dissipates among a maze of marble columns. Mr. Howard is intelligent and pathetic rather than tragic, and so for that matter does Miss Shearer incline to be; yet her tenderness is honored throughout by a certain simplicity of background, and its own purity gives it a special kind of power. The lines of the play are in general well spoken. But many of them are missing, and some to no advantage. The clowning in the first scene would be better with more words, and the tendency everywhere to isolate significant couplets gives them an unnaturalness which they do not have in their context. Nevertheless "Romeo and Juliet" is one of the two or three best current films, and for my part I am eager for more from the same author.

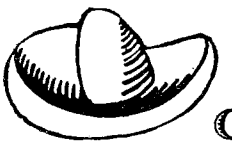
MARK VAN DOREN

ART

Toward an American Art

ONE comes away from the exhibition now being held at the Museum of Modern Art by the Federal Art Project with a feeling that the depression of 1929-? may prove to have been the best thing that ever happened to American art. The government relief projects—the PWAP and the Artists' Project which has succeeded it—have not made the artist rich, but they have kept him alive and given him what he sorely lacked—opportunity. He used to be poor and discouraged. Now he is poor and encouraged. And that is a profound change in his condition. Moreover, the Artists' Project is giving opportunity not merely to the artists in a few large centers but to artists all over the country. Let any doubter attend this exhibition. And strident critics of governmental extravagance in relief may very well calm down long enough to ponder this passage from the introduction to the catalogue, written by Holger Cahill, director of the project:

> A far wider demand for works of art has developed on the part of schools, libraries, and other public institutions than the Federal Art Project, with its large body of workers, has been able to meet. "Our schools are bare." "We have no art of any kind in our community." Appeals containing statements of this kind are constantly being received by the directors of state and regional



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projects. . . . An attempt to bridge the gap between the American artist and the American public has governed the entire program of the Federal Art Project.

This exhibition has been well chosen and arranged to give the visitor a sort of bird's-eye view of the project's activities. There are sketches for mural decorations and sections of finished work, supplemented with occasional whole decorative schemes in miniature. There are many paintings and water colors, lithographs, woodcuts, etchings, and drawings—and even an interesting sand-picture by a Colorado Indian artist. There are posters and photographs. The valuable Index of American Design is represented in selections which give a comprehensive idea of both the remarkable regional variety in the early American industrial arts and the careful workmanship which has gone into the making of the graphic record. There is a small but creditable showing of sculpture, outstanding in which are the wood carvings of Patrocino Barela, inspired by the Catholic-Indian tradition of New Mexico. And last, but by no means least in interest, is the truly remarkable work which is being done by children under the project's teachers, work full of imagination, humor conscious or unconscious—as in a ten-year-old's idea of a cutie ready for parade—and a lively feeling for color and design. One sculpture here merits special mention—fifteen-year-old Mike Mosco's head of a miner.

Among the easel pictures one meets names of artists who need no introduction to the public. Indeed, this exhibition could no doubt have been made up from the works of artists not only well known but deservedly so; and it is to the credit of the director and his assistants that it is not. Instead of yielding to the temptation to make the best possible showing, they seem to have been guided throughout by the resolve to make the show representative both regionally and artistically. As a result it gives one a sense of growth, of spirit stirring to life under the impetus of governmental interest and help.

Because mural painting has been the most backward of American arts—in spite of acres of wall space smeared over with the precious conceits of alleged mural painters—and because I have never seen how the condition could be remedied by any other means than that of trial and error, I am particularly pleased with the section devoted to mural projects. The method of trial and error in this field is for obvious reasons not available to the artist working "on his own"; therefore the decorative schemes which the project is carrying out are of special significance for the future of American art. The results already obtained through giving artists all over the country opportunities to decorate the walls of public and semi-public buildings are astonishing when one considers how short a time the project has been in existence. In style the work ranges from the naturalistic to the abstract, in quality from competent to excellent. I find especially pleasing the original and charming murals for children by Hester Miller Murray, the amusing decorations for a playroom by Max Spivak, the interesting scenes from contemporary American life by Edgar Britton, Alfred Crimi, Karl Kelpe. In this last category the influence of Diego Rivera is strongly in evidence, which is both natural and fortunate. We are doubly indebted to Rivera for having taught our painters what magnificent material lies ready to hand in the manifold activities of American life, and for having revived the art of fresco painting. Outstanding among the frescoes shown here is the fine work of James Michael Newell, whose ambitious scheme, "The Development of Western Civilization," for a reading-room in a Bronx library, promises to be one of the most important decorative works that have been done in this country.

SUZANNE LA FOLLETTE

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Letters to the Editors

A Letter from Trotsky

[*The following letter from Leon Trotsky to the Norwegian Minister of Justice was sent to* The Nation *via London by one of Mr. Trotsky's secretaries.*]

TO MR. LIE,
MINISTER OF JUSTICE, OSLO.

Sir: I have always endeavored to comply with the conditions governing my stay in Norway, both in the letter and in the spirit, at least as I understood them. It develops, however, that the Chief of the Central Passport Office has interpreted these conditions in quite a different manner, and as far as I am aware, his interpretation is approved by you, the Minister. As I am deeply concerned in further enjoying for myself and my wife the favor of Norwegian institutions, I would be prepared to accept the interpretation of the conditions of which I was not made aware before my coming to Norway if I could gain the conviction that this new interpretation could be reconciled with my dignity as a human being and as a writer. I can only sign what I have clearly understood and what I can really undertake to fulfil. According to the Chief of the Central Passport Office, who, incidentally, when I came into the country, gave me a somewhat hostile interview without waiting for any action of any kind on my part, my activities are to be confined solely to "historical works and general theoretical essays which are not directed against any country."

How am I to interpret this limitation? Is, for example, my autobiography a general theoretical essay or a topical political work? Three weeks ago I wrote a detailed analysis of the development of the Soviet Union. I myself am compelled to pass judgment now: I have the impression that this work contributes no small service to social science. On the other hand, this work, by the mere concrete analysis of facts, is directed against the ruling bureaucratic caste which is continuing to exploit the people economically and suppress it politically. Is it really possible in a democratic country to accept the stricture that the Chief of the Passport Office may decide whether this work is only scientific or also politically topical?

I could quote an incomparably greater and more worthy example. My great teacher and master, Karl Marx, wrote a book called "Capital." I try to imagine for a moment that the Chief of the Passport Office or any other authority had to decide whether this grandiose work was only scientific or whether it also had a topical political character. The decision would not be so easy to make, for this work, built upon the granite foundation of science, is illustrated by thousands of topical examples and has as a whole today far greater political importance than on the day of its first appearance. It is not a coincidence that the whole struggle of reaction, of the official and unofficial type, is directed against Marxism and Marxists.

The Chief of the Passport Office reproaches me for an article in which I took the position that the struggle in France could only end with a victory for military reaction or with the building of Soviets. Perhaps I am mistaken in my analysis. In any case I attribute to this analysis a thoroughly scientific character. The article in question appeared in the universally known bourgeois-democratic American journal, *The Nation*. If I had written an article in which I explained theoretically the general advantages of an autocratic regime over democracy, would this article have been disapproved by the Chief of the Passport Office? Unfortunately, this question is not yet clear to me, especially after the visit I had today from the Chief of the Passport Office.

The declaration demanded of me includes also the promise "not to allow myself to be interviewed by any Norwegian or foreign journalist." During the whole of my stay in Norway up to the last days I have given only one single interview, that is, to the editor of the *Arbeiderbladet*, and this, sir, in your own presence, and even with you kindly taking part, which even now I appreciate. You may perhaps recall that I personally tried to avoid even this single interview in order to provoke as little noise and sensation as possible in connection with my name.

But now the question is different. I have been accused by the judicial authorities of Moscow of being the organizer of terrorist acts. The entire world press is dealing with this historic trial. If you, as Minister of Justice, or the authorities controlled by you, or the Norwegian government, deem it possible or likely that I have misused my sojourn in Norway or anywhere else for this kind of activity, I expect immediately a warrant for my arrest. I desire nothing else but to have the opportunity to bring into the light of day, before an open juridical forum, this monstrous crime of the G. P. U. and of the powers behind it. But if the Norwegian authorities deem it impossible to interfere in this matter, they have the duty—I repeat, the elementary duty, which is not necessarily even a democratic one—to allow me complete liberty to tell the truth to the whole world by the means at my individual disposal. The principal means of informing public opinion is through the press. To refrain from bringing me to trial before a Norwegian court and at the same time to rob me of the possibility of appeal to public opinion on a question that concerns myself, my son, my whole political past, and my political honor, would mean to transform the right of asylum into a trap and to allow free passage to the executioners and slanderers of the G. P. U.

These are the reasons which make it impossible for me to fulfil the demand of the Chief of the Central Passport Office to sign the declaration which he has presented to me without drawing the attention of the government and of public opinion in advance to the unforeseeable consequences of such action for the moral existence of myself and my family.

L. TROTSKY

Norway, August 26

NOTE: At the urgent request of the Minister of Justice this letter was not published as originally intended. All copies were forcibly removed from Trotsky's secretaries. By chance, one copy had already been sent abroad, giving us the opportunity—after considerable delay—of bringing this document before the public.

ERWIN WOLFE,
JEAN VAN HEISENOORT,
Secretaries to Leon Trotsky

Taking from Peter to Pay Paul

Dear Sirs: In the wake of Harvard's spectacular tercentenary celebration lie the dust and ashes of the School of City Planning, a burnt offering on the altar of tercentenary ambitions.

The aims and ideals embodied in "Har-

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vard national scholarships" and "roving professorships" swept the slate clean of all minor considerations and lesser interests of the university. The drive for the Tercentenary Fund has trampled under foot every just claim and will continue to do so for an indefinite period. As President Conant said, the $5,488,000 is just "a beginning."

This is not the time to denounce the tragedy and injustice of discontinuing the school or to raise moral issues, for mere criticism will not answer the present need. Dr. Conant is proving himself a far-sighted leader. Great tasks deserve the undivided energies of great leaders; lesser monuments must be carved by means of the determination and devotion of helpers.

Are there any such helpers—persons who, not necessarily professing allegiance to the name of Harvard, live or work in the name or spirit of the social ideals that permeate comprehensive physical planning? Would that they could contribute effectively to undoing the violence that has been done! Harvard University's Graduate School of City Planning promised to be a noble edifice. It should not be allowed to die.

OSCAR SUTERMEISTER

Cambridge, Mass., September 22

CONTRIBUTORS

LOUIS FISCHER, *The Nation's* Moscow correspondent, completed his annual tour of the Soviet Union at the end of the summer. He is now in Spain, where he will write articles which will appear in *The Nation* during the fall.

ABRAHAM EPSTEIN wrote the two articles on the Social Security Act appearing in this and next week's issues of *The Nation* several months ago before social security became one of the outstanding issues of the campaign. He is executive secretary of the American Association for Old Age Security and author of "Insecurity: A Challenge to America."

BARBARA WERTHEIM was a representative of the press on the Presidential train which carried Mr. Roosevelt down to Pittsburgh and back to New York.

LOUIS ADAMIC, in "A Native's Return," recounted his interview with King Alexander and bitterly criticized the King for his ruthless dictatorial methods. Mr. Adamic's latest novel, "Cradle of Life," is set in Yugoslavia.

MARYA ZATURENSKA is the author of a volume of poems, "Threshold and Hearth," which won the Shelley Memorial Award. Miss Zaturenska's forthcoming book of poems is tentatively entitled "Cold Morning Sky."

WILLIAM PHILLIPS is one of the editors of the *Partisan Review* and frequently contributes literary criticism to its pages.

JAMES RORTY published a series of articles on the medical profession in *The Nation* last summer. His most recent book is the record of a journey across the United States, "Where Life Is Better."

SAMUEL SILLEN is a member of the English faculty of Washington Square College, New York University. He has contributed reviews to various journals.

RUTH BRINDZE'S column Facts for Consumers formerly appeared in *The Nation*. She is active in the groups now seeking a new deal for the consumer, and her book "How to Spend Money" is one of the more useful and practical volumes for the ordinary buyer of consumer goods.

MAX ASCOLI, an Italian who does not support Mussolini, lectures on politics and law at the New School for Social Research.

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